

THE EYES OF ACHILLEUS: *ILLAD* 1.200

G. I. C. ROBERTSON

θάμβησεν δ' Ἀχιλεὺς μετὰ δ' ἐτράπετ', αὐτίκα δ' ἔγνω
Παλλὰδ' Ἀθηναίην· δεινὸν δέ οἱ ὄσσε φάανθεν·

Achilleus turned round in amazement, and immediately recognized Pallas Athene; her eyes flashed terribly. (*Iliad* 1.199–200)

THIS IS A CRITICAL MOMENT in the first book of the *Iliad*: Achilleus is about to be persuaded by Athene to resist the urge to kill Agamemnon after the latter has declared his intention to seize Achilleus' concubine Briseis. The text appears above as it is printed in the OCT (Monro and Allen 1902: 8), and the translation given here represents the interpretation that has been accepted by the vast majority of commentators and translators. With very few exceptions, scholars have not seriously entertained the possibility that the eyes in line 200 may not be Athene's; but the pronoun οἱ could equally be read as meaning "his," and the eyes may be those of Achilleus.¹ I shall argue here that this interpretation deserves more attention than it has usually been given. Some older arguments will be revisited, including the relatively recent contribution of H.-W. Nörenberg (1972), but I believe that the case for such a reading can be strengthened by some further points which have not previously been made. Achilleus' behaviour later in the poem, in particular at the assembly in Book 19, favours this interpretation, and the question is significant for our understanding of the character of the hero.

At 1.200, the scholiasts (Erbse 1969: 65) acknowledge both possibilities; they suggest ὁ δέ ἀντὶ τοῦ γάρ, implying that Achilleus recognized Athene because of the appearance of her eyes, but add τινὲς δὲ φάανθεν ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐφωτίσθησαν οἱ τοῦ ἥρωος ὀφθαλμοί, i.e., other scholars refer the flashing eyes to the hero.² As to the first interpretation, the assumption that Achilleus needs some visible characteristic of the goddess to facilitate recognition may be thought to be justified by other divine epiphanies in the poem, such as Helen's recognition of Aphrodite's "beautiful neck, lovely bosom, and shining eyes" (περικαλλέα δειρὴν / στήθεά

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¹In which case, incidentally, it may be preferable to punctuate with a comma after Ἀθηναίην, and perhaps (as in West 1998, which appeared after the submission of this article) with a colon after ἐτράπετ'. In addition to the works discussed below, translators who refer the phrase δεινὸν δέ οἱ ὄσσε φάανθεν to the eyes of Athene include Volterrano (in Fabbri 1984); Chapman (in Nicoll 1956); Pope (in Shankman 1996); Leoni 1823; Merivale 1878; Derby 1894; Butler (in Loomis 1942); Lang, Leaf, and Myers 1914; Murray 1924; de Lisle 1928; Richards 1950; Rieu 1950; Lattimore 1951; Andrew and Oakley 1955; Graves 1960; West 1971; Hull 1982; Hammond 1987; Fagles 1990; Reck 1994; Lombardo 1997.

²See the apparatus in Erbse 1969 for other instances of the particle δέ as equivalent to γάρ. Cf. Ameis and Hentze 1965: 17 ("begründender Satz").

θ' ἡμερόεντα καὶ ὄμματα μαρμαίροντα, 3.396–397)³ and the recognition of the “tracks” (ἵχνια) of Poseidon by the lesser Aias at 13.66–72. But those deities have disguised themselves as humans (3.386–389; 13.45), whereas in our case Athene does not bother with a disguise; the appearance of specific characteristics enabling identification is therefore not necessary, and Achilles (to whom alone she appears: ὄψ φαινομένη, 1.198) recognizes her at once.⁴ The implication is that deities are perfectly capable of making themselves recognizable to mortals when the occasion requires it.

Following the line of thought that there must be something about Athene's eyes in particular that prompts the recognition, some have suggested that there is a connection with Athene's epithet γλαυκῶπις.⁵ Kirk is among these, and it is noteworthy that the most recent major commentary on the *Iliad* does not even mention the possibility that the eyes may not be those of Athene after all,⁶ an opinion which (though it has found few adherents) is at least as old as the scholia. Mazon suggests that attempts to see in the phrase δεινὸν δέ οἱ ὄσσε φάανθεν a reference to a permanent characteristic of the goddess are misguided: “le temps employé par le poète, l'aoriste, ne peut désigner l'éclat permanent d'un regard; il

³ Pope, referring to this recognition of Aphrodite, writes that the eyes in 1.200 “should be referr'd to *Minerva*; according to an opinion of the ancients, who suppos'd that the Gods had a peculiar light in their eyes” (Shankman 1996: 60), but at 3.396–397 it is not *only* the eyes which reveal Aphrodite's identity. Pope goes on to cite Heliodoros 3.12–13 as an authority for the “fix'd glare” of the eyes of the gods, but *Il.* 1.200 is the only Homeric passage quoted there as evidence for it, and in any case we need not be bound by the interpretation of Heliodoros (who is at this point preparing the way for Kalasiris to explain why Homer must have been an Egyptian).

⁴ Achilles seems to be perceptive in this respect: later in the poem, when Apollo (disguised as Agenor) tells Achilles, a mortal, to stop chasing him, a god (θνητὸς ἐὼν θεὸν ἄμβροτον, 22.9), Achilles instantly knows, without any further clues, which god he is chasing (22.15). It may be that Apollo drops his disguise when he speaks here, and the parallel with the intervention of Athene in Book 1 is thereby strengthened. On the other hand, given the hero's unprompted recognition that it was Apollo who caused the plague in Book 1 (for this σχῆμα κατὰ τὸ σιωπώμενον, see Robbins 1990: 3–4) and the “thematic and formal convergences between Apollo and Achilles” (Nagy 1979: 143, followed by Rabel 1988: 475, n. 11), it may be that Achilles is capable of knowing what Apollo is doing; cf. his knowledge that Apollo is on the Trojan side (16.94) and that it was Apollo who rescued Hektor from him (20.450).

⁵ For example, “The ancients assigned to Minerva a bright, piercing, brilliant eye, of a light bluish-gray color, as indicated by the epithet γλαυκῶπις The reference is to the eyes of Minerva, not those of Achilles” (Anthon 1865: 158); “‘And terrible to him her eyes appeared,’ viz., as γλαυκῶπις” (Paley 1866: 16); “This gives a hint for the interpretation of the epithet γλαυκῶπις, 206” (Bond and Walpole 1898: 41); “The hero . . . turns and recognizes the goddess, seeing the shining eyes which characterize Athena, γλαυκῶπις, the goddess of the clear blue eyes” (Griffin 1980: 159). I do not, of course, intend to deny that the Greeks thought of Athene as having a powerful gaze (see Csapo 1997: 256 for some references), only to reinforce the case for reading *Il.* 1.200 as referring to that of Achilles.

⁶ “Her terrible eyes shine forth—she is a goddess, and in an urgent mood. But she is also Athene, who is conventionally γλαυκῶπις in Homer (as indeed shortly at 206); whether that means ‘blue-grey-eyed’ or ‘owl-eyed,’ it still makes her remarkable for her gaze, and Akhilleus recognizes her at once” (Kirk 1985: 74).

convient seulement à une lueur subite apparaissant dans ce regard" (Mazon *et al.* 1937: 11). But the fact that these eyes (whether they are Athene's or Achilleus') appear "terrible" at this moment does not mean that they cannot be "terrible" on other occasions, or indeed habitually, and so this argument must be regarded as inconclusive.

Further light may be shed on the question by looking at the pronoun οἱ, which is usually taken to be a possessive dative referring to Athene, with or without explicit reference to the δέ/γάρ equivalence noted by the scholia.⁷ But Achilleus is the subject of the sentence (1.199–200), and speaks at 1.202; οἱ refers more naturally to him. Some scholars have, therefore, understood the pronoun to refer to Achilleus, but not in a possessive sense: Athene's eyes appeared δεινῶ to the hero.⁸ Leaf (1900: 18) considers both options, and casts his vote for the possessive: "οἱ may refer to Athene—*her* eyes gleamed terrible; or to Achilles—terrible shone *her* eyes *on him*." He compares *Iliad* 19.16–17 which, he says, "is in favour of the former view." Now at 19.16–17, οἱ does indeed appear in a possessive sense, and in a clause whose relevance to 1.200 is immediately apparent:

ὥς εἶδ', ὥς μιν μᾶλλον ἔδου χόλος, ἐν δέ οἱ ὄσσε
δεινὸν ὑπὸ βλεφάρων ὥς εἰ σέλας ἐξεφάανθεν.⁹

When he saw [the armour], then all the more the anger came upon him, and under his eyelids his eyes flashed out terribly, like a flame.

But Leaf and others who cite this passage in support of a possessive dative at 1.200,¹⁰ presumably looking only at the syntactical parallels, appear not to have noticed that both 19.16–17 and 19.365–367 (to which Leaf draws attention in his note to 19.16–17)¹¹ certainly refer to the eyes of Achilleus, who is now preparing for battle to avenge the death of Patroklos.

⁷ For example, "δεινὸν δέ, etc., and *her eyes shone*, etc." (Felton 1837: 400); "οἱ [αὐτῇ]: nearly equal to poss. gen. limiting ὄσσε" (Keep 1883: 176); "οἱ, Athene, 'her eyes looked terrible'" (Monro 1890: 253); "The meaning is '*for* her eyes flashed dreadfully'" (Leaf and Bayfield 1908: 284); "φοῖ Minervae" (van Leeuwen 1912: 17); "the δέ is to be translated '*for*'; and οἱ refers to Athene" (Willcock 1978: 191); "οἱ: translate '*her*' with ὄσσε" (Harrison and Jordan 1983: 19); "οἱ refers to Athena" (Pharr 1985: 106).

⁸ For example, "terrible to him her eyes appeared" (Paley 1866: 16); "schrecklich erstrahlten ihm ihre Augen" (Reucher 1983: 20). So also the translations of, for example, Voss (1806), Mac Héil (Ó Doibhlin 1981), Ernle (1922), Buckley (1936), Smith and Miller (1945), and Fitzgerald (1974).

⁹ The other Homeric passages referring to eyes, and using οἱ in such a sense, are *Il.* 1.104 (= *Od.* 4.662), 13.474, 15.607–608, and *Od.* 6.131–132.

¹⁰ Ameis and Hentze 1965: 17, for example. Nörenberg (1972: 254), on the other hand, notes that Nägelsbach (1850: 56) attributed the eyes in 1.200 to Achilleus on the basis of 19.16–17.

¹¹ τὼ δέ οἱ ὄσσε / λαμπέσθην ὥς εἴ τε πυρὸς σέλας, ἐν δέ οἱ ἦτορ / δῶν' ἄχος ἄτλητον ("and his eyes shone like a blaze of fire, and unbearable grief entered his heart"). Edwards also notes the parallel *ad loc.* (1991: 237), and, following C. H. Whitman, comments on the particular association of fire imagery with Achilleus in the final part of the *Iliad*.

These two passages from Book 19, and their implications for our understanding of the character of Achilles, will be discussed further below, but even if we leave them aside for the moment, there is reason enough to doubt that the eyes in 1.200 are those of Athene. Burkert (1985: 142) suggests that "Athena's shining eyes mark a moment of lucid prudence in the darkening quarrel," but the adjective δεινῶ suggests otherwise. Athene is described as δεινή at 5.839 and Apollo as δεινός at 16.789; but in both those cases the god in question has come to kill rather than to advocate restraint. And the phrase δεινὰ δερκομένη ("glaring terribly") is used at 11.37 to describe another supernatural being: the Gorgo, hardly a model of "lucid prudence."¹²

On the contrary, "[b]lazing eyes are a sign of strong emotion," notes Garvie (1994: 116),¹³ and the eyes at 1.200 appear "terrible" with anger; when Athene's gaze is described by Alkaios (298.24) as δεινον, it is because she is angry at the violation of her sanctuary, as Achilles in our case is angry at Agamemnon. Dacier (1741: 68) points out that it must be Achilles "qui a les yeux enflammés de colere, & non pas la Déesse. Le caractere d'Achille devoit remettre dans le bon chemin ceux qui s'y font trompés, & Eustathe lui-même. Ces yeux terribles & enflammés ne conviennent point au caractère de Minerve, qui parle à Achille avec tant de douceur," a point unjustly dismissed by Pope.¹⁴ The same argument is made by Mazon: "il ne peut s'agir ici d'Athéné, qui vient prêcher à Achille le calme et qui doit rester impassible; il s'agit du héros lui-même, qui s'indigne de voir les dieux intervenir en faveur d'Agamemnon."¹⁵ As Edwards (1987: 180–181) points out, Achilles is so indignant that he does not even let Athene speak first, as would be expected in such a scene.

Nörenberg (1972: 253–254) makes some of these points: he quotes Mazon on the use of the aorist tense (which is, however, not decisive), notes that the run of the sentence and the καί in line 201 suggest that the οἱ refers to Achilles, and observes that the flashing eyes are appropriate not to Athene's reply at 207–214, but to Achilles' furious outburst of rhetorical questions and protests. Further, he cites Lesky's characterization (based on 11.654) of Achilles as a δεινὸς ἀνήρ

¹² Csapo (1997: 256) notes that Sophokles twice refers to Athene as γοργῶπις ("Gorgon-eyed"). The context of fr. 844 (cited as fr. 884 by Csapo) is uncertain, but at *Aias* 450 the hero, in his bitterness at the malice of the goddess, uses "a disparaging substitute for Athena's regular epithet, γλαυκῶπις" (Stanford 1963: 118).

¹³ Garvie makes this comment with respect to the blazing eyes of the lion in the simile describing Odysseus at *Od.* 6.130–134. Glenn (1998: 112) has recently suggested in his discussion of this simile that blazing/gleaming/flashing eyes are one of the most common and emphatic elements of erotic passion in ancient Greek poetry. While this may be true in the context of the meeting of Odysseus and Nausikaa, Garvie's more general observation of "strong emotion" is of course more helpful for our scene in the *Iliad*.

¹⁴ Pope's response: "Madam Dacier . . . blames Eustathius and others without overthrowing those authorities, or assigning any other reason but that it was not proper for *Minerva's* eyes to sparkle, when her speech was *mild*" (Shankman 1996: 60).

¹⁵ Mazon *et al.* 1937: 11. Two other translations which interpret the phrase as referring to the eyes of Achilles are those of Church (1878) and Rouse (1938).

(Lesky 1961: 22), and points out that in the *Iliad*, a hero's anger will almost always have some external sign. One of the heroes of whom this is true, as Nörenberg mentions, is Agamemnon, Achilles' opponent in Book 1. When Agamemnon is angry at the seer Kalchas, the poet tells us that ὅσσε δέ οἱ πυρὶ λαμπετόωντι εἴκτην (1.104). But there may be more in this parallel than Nörenberg observes: occurring as it does so close to the scene with Athene, this line provides another perspective in which 1.200 may be viewed.

The first book of the *Iliad* describes the circumstances and effects of Achilles' anger at Agamemnon; after the death of Patroklos, however, Achilles directs his anger against Hektor. There are similarities between Achilles' conduct when he returns to the fighting and the earlier savagery of Agamemnon, notably Achilles' rejection of the supplication of Lykaon in Book 21 as compared with Agamemnon's treatment of the sons of Antimachos in Book 11. Richardson (1993: 62), commenting on 21.99–113, notes Griffin's observation (1980: 55) that "Agamemnon is ruthless and unreflective; Achilles kills in a passionate revenge, but not in blind ferocity," but cautions that "we must not exaggerate Achilles' sympathy here: the contemptuous tone of [21.]122–35 shows us his other side." For all Achilles' sensitivity to "the perspective of human life and death as a whole" and "his fundamental kinship with those whom he kills" (Griffin 1980: 55), he can act as brutally as Agamemnon; we may then see the reference to Achilles' eyes at 1.200, following closely after the description of Agamemnon's eyes at 1.104, as an early indication of how similar the reactions of these two heroes can be when they are angered.

The Achilles whom we see towards the end of the poem is motivated by emotional forces similar to those that prompt his desire to kill Agamemnon in Book 1; this is made clear by the vocabulary of the two passages from Book 19 mentioned above. Having lost his companion Patroklos and being determined to kill the man at whose hands he fell, Achilles is overcome by grief (ἄχος, 19.367) and anger (χόλος, 19.16), which, as we have seen, are in both cases associated with his blazing eyes. In our scene from Book 1, the hero is driven by the same emotions (ἄχος, 1.188; οὐ πῶ λῆγε χόλοιο, 1.224); he is about to lose Briseïs, and threatens to kill the man who is taking her away. Both Briseïs and Patroklos receive extraordinary affection from Achilles ("just as I loved her with all my heart, though she was my captive," 9.342–343; "Patroklos, whom I honoured above all my companions, as much as my own life," 18.81–82), and when they are taken away from him one after the other, his responses in each case are very similar—including the manifestation of these emotions in his eyes, if we understand the eyes in 1.200 to be those of Achilles.¹⁶

In his discussion of the implications of a tripartite division of the *Iliad*, Taplin has pointed out that the opening scenes of what he designates "part III" (18.354 to the end of the poem) "complete the sequence of 'confrontations' between

¹⁶ Once again, compare 1.200: δεινὸν δέ οἱ ὅσσε φάανθεν with 19.16–17: ἐν δέ οἱ ὅσσε / δεινὸν ... ἐξεφάανθεν.

Achilleus and Agamemnon, complementing in various ways those of books 1 and 9," and that "the quarrel . . . at the start of part I is called off in the corresponding *agore* of the Achaïans at the start of part III" (Taplin 1992: 205 and 21), that is, in the *agore* in Book 19, where Achilleus' rage again shows in his face. The glimpses of the angry eyes of Achilleus in Books 1 and 19 emphasize the correspondences between these two confrontations involving two quick-tempered heroes.

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
97 ST GEORGE ST
TORONTO, ONTARIO
M5S 2E8

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