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Genealogical History and Character in Homeric Epic

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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2015

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Declaration

I confirm that no part of the material offered has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or any other University. This thesis is exclusively based on my own research.

Material from the work of others has been acknowledged and quotations and paraphrases suitably indicated.

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Abstract

This thesis examines how individual characterisation in the Homeric poems is informed by and reflects the traditional narrative of genealogical history which is embedded in the early hexameter tradition. By reading specific characters in the context of their place in traditional history, I move closer to how they may have been received by their earliest audiences, while also interpreting them as individual mimetic characters as may be found in a work of written literature. My aim is to demonstrate that large-scale patterns which can be seen across the hexameter tradition have relevance to the small-scale details which create a compelling character in an individual poem. In part I of the thesis I examine how the Hesiodic and Homeric poems present a narrative of cosmic history which is structured by certain repeated patterns of change over each generation. Over a vast and unspecified period of time, men become gradually more distant from the gods, and are physically weaker; but this is balanced by social strengthening and an increasing awareness of justice. Although the different poems of the hexameter tradition articulate this history in different ways, they share an awareness of these patterns.

In part II I examine how this traditional narrative of genealogical history can help us to understand three Homeric characters, chosen as particularly fruitful examples because they mark crucial changes in genealogical history. I argue that the characterisation of the Homeric Helen reflects her role in the wider tradition as an instrument of Zeus' plan to destroy the heroes, and this is one reason why she is depicted as so detached, isolated, and as uttering uniquely vehement expressions of self-hatred. I then examine the characters of Penelope and Telemachus, both of whom are subject to the competing imperatives of traditional patterns of change on the one hand, and Odysseus' inevitable return on the other hand. While Penelope's struggles to suspend the passage of time in her husband's absence are rewarded on his return, Telemachus' partial but incomplete transition to manhood leaves him frustrated. The traditional patterns of genealogical history have varying effects on each of these three characters, but in each case I show that we can gain a fuller and more coherent understanding of their presentation by placing them in the context of that wider tradition.

Acknowledgements

I am immensely grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Barbara Graziosi, for her unfailing support, advice and encouragement throughout my time at Durham, for sharing her wisdom and infectious enjoyment of the Homeric poems, and for always challenging me to do better, try harder, and have higher expectations of myself and my work. I am also thankful for the valuable advice offered by Prof. Johannes Haubold in the final stages of writing this thesis.

My husband, Charlie, has been by my side throughout my years of study for this thesis, and without him the whole process, and life in general, would have been much less fun.

Introduction

This thesis examines individual characterisation in the Homeric poems by positioning each character in the context of the narrative of history which is embedded within the hexameter tradition. The thesis therefore has two main aims: to demonstrate that the poems of Homer, Hesiod and the Epic Cycle all show awareness of a common narrative of the history of the universe, which is structured by a pattern of change through each generation; and to show that this history makes a difference to how we understand Homeric characterisation. The first of these aims focuses on a macrocosmic level, as the traditional epic narrative of history encompasses the origins and development of the world, the gods, and mankind. The second aim is microcosmic, as it assesses the individual details of characterisation which are visible in the Homeric poems, in specific moments in history. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the interrelation of the macrocosmic and the microcosmic, of the big picture and the tiniest details of characterisation. This kind of interrelation is, I contend, possible because of the coherence of the hexameter tradition, and the shared narrative of history which is embedded in that tradition.

In this thesis I hope to show that there is still great scope for new and stimulating interpretations of Homeric characters. Although in recent decades the division between "oral" and "literary" approaches to the poems has largely dissolved, and most interpretations now make use of a combination of the two,[1] the question of characterisation still needs refinement. As I discuss below, the overtly literary appreciation of Homeric characterisation by Griffin in the 1980s, still one of the most famous and effective treatments of the topic, was accompanied by his almost total rejection of Parry's work, and his stinging repudiation of the Epic Cycle as comparative evidence.[2] I aim to show in this thesis that the individuality and pathos which Griffin saw in the Homeric poems is not incompatible with our understanding of their traditional system of language, their oral origins, and how they can be seen to interact with the wider tradition. As Clay has argued, the hexameter tradition contains within it a narrative of cosmic history which is coherent and consistent through different poems.[3] I go beyond Clay's arguments to show that the deep and moving characterisation which is

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[1] More on this below; de Jong (1999) 1-13 gives a brief but lucid summary of how these once-divisive labels have dissolved, and of reactions to and developments of Parry's work in the last decades of the twentieth century.

[2] Griffin (1980); see Griffin (1977) for his rejection of the Epic Cycle.

[3] Clay (1983), (1989), (2003).

apparent to an audience of the Homeric poems reflects that character's place in traditional history. By demonstrating how these patterns of history are embedded within and evoked by the poems of Hesiod and Homer, and examining how those patterns affect individual characters in Homeric epic, this thesis brings together the big picture of oral-traditional theory with the more literary concerns of characterisation.

Two terms I use here would benefit from further explanation at this early stage: "tradition" and "history". The first of these, "tradition", is one of the most widely-used terms in Homeric scholarship, but it is somewhat multivalent. Any study of the Homeric poems will present its own understanding of what is meant by "tradition", whether implicitly or explicitly, and this thesis understands the term as it has been explicated by Scodel, Foley and Burgess in particular.[4] As well as its diachronic meaning, describing the process of poems being "handed down" (from the Latin "tradere") over a period of time, the hexameter tradition is conceived of in a synchronic way, as a body of stories, themes, characters, places and events which together form a coherent unity. The development and use of those elements over a long period of time, the diachronic meaning of tradition, is concurrent with the synchronic meaning of tradition as a canon, or an "inherited repertory".[5] As my thesis is not directly concerned with the formation or transmission of hexameter poetry, I do not usually invoke the diachronic meaning of "tradition" as a process. Instead, I use this term in a similar way to Foley, who defines it as essentially a language – "specialized and highly idiomatic ... with a focused purpose and a particular content and context, but nonetheless a language".[6] This is a useful way of conceptualising the epic tradition of early Greece, because its language can be shared between different users and different instances while remaining recognisably the same.[7] Like a language, tradition in this sense is not objective or concrete, but subject to shifts and variations in different instances. As Slatkin emphasises, the traditional poet is therefore involved in a process of choice and selection at every juncture, as

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[4] Scodel (2002) 1-41 examines and negotiates the complex meanings of tradition, and how a period of oral transmission and performance affects the tradition. The most thorough recent explanations of what we mean by "tradition" and how it operates are offered by Foley (1991), (1999); Burgess (2001) presents a convincing example of how we should conceive of the epic tradition and the place of the Homeric poems within it. See also Kirk (1976) and Dowden (2004).

[5] Scodel (2002) 3.

[6] Foley (1999) xii. Foley (1999) 32 goes on to elaborate on this by stating that the oral tradition operates "like a language, only more so".

[7] In this way the use of the epic tradition can be conceived of using Saussure's theory of the signifier and the signified: the tradition is the *langue* and each use of that tradition in a poem or a story is an individual *parole*. See Saussure (1949); for a summary and survey of his theory see Gordon (2004). Nagy (1996a) 1 draws an alternative parallel of *parole* with performance and *langue* with composition.

they create their own form of interaction with the tradition.[8] It is also not objectively identifiable: it would have been impossible in the archaic period, and it is certainly impossible now, for anyone to experience every single poem or story of the hexameter tradition, so there is no objective test to determine what is and is not traditional. As Scodel advises, we can only judge what is "familiar" or "unfamiliar" based on the stories and the poems we already know.[9] To say that an element of a story is traditional is really to say that it fits with what we have heard before; that it makes sense. When in this thesis I discuss the hexameter tradition, I am using this sense of tradition as a language, a coherent whole which can be subjected to some variation in different contexts without losing its essential integrity and unity.

Building on this understanding of tradition, one of the prime concerns of this thesis is what I will call a narrative of "traditional history". This narrative will sometimes be referred to as "cosmic" history, because it encompasses the whole plan of the universe, and gods and men within it; and as "genealogical" history, because that plan is articulated and structured by the passing of each successive generation. Thus, the narrative of history which is embedded in early hexameter poetry is a constant and continuous process which begins with the creation of the world and the birth of the gods, and is still ongoing for the poets and audiences of the Hesiodic and Homeric poems, including ourselves, today. This history, I argue, is structured by certain patterns of change over each succeeding generation of, first, the gods, and then mankind. As each generation is born, ages, and dies, these patterns can be seen to be repeated according to the same principles. Rather than being an endlessly repeated cycle from age to age, however, these patterns shape the history of gods and men on a grand scale. Over a vast and unspecified period of time, we can see that men and gods become more distant from one another; men suffer diminishing physical strength and power; but they also establish and develop more advanced social structures and systems. The detailed process of this pattern of change, and how it has an impact on the lives of men and gods, is investigated in this thesis.

My two main aims are reflected in how the thesis is divided into two parts. Part I elucidates and examines the structuring patterns of change which are embedded in the traditional hexameter narrative of genealogical history, and shared across the different poems of the epic tradition. Part II of my thesis operates on a different scale, at the level of individual characters in the Homeric poems. From the wide focus of part I, the chapters in

[8] Slatkin (2011) 21-9.
[9] Scodel (2002) 32.

part II zoom in on a much narrower temporal scope and examine the implications of these patterns of history for the interpretation of specific characters who exist at crucial points in that timescale. The two parts of my thesis reflect one another in a way that echoes the relationship between the tradition and individual poems, because each character study in the second half relies upon the narrative of genealogical history which is established in the first half. The chapters of part I build the foundations upon which will be built the specific character interpretations of part II. In this Introduction I explain the methodology of the two parts in order to demonstrate how they work together towards the aims of the thesis as a whole.

Part I: Patterns of Genealogical History

Part I of this thesis identifies and examines the patterns of genealogical history which are presented in the Hesiodic and Homeric poems, by analysis of certain repeated phrases and narrative patterns in the extant early hexameter texts. The methodology of this section can in large part be traced back to Parry, and is influenced by more recent studies, by Nagy, Haubold, and others, about how traditional language can transmit traditional themes.[10] Parry's study of the Homeric poems' traditional system of language, especially his revolutionary understanding of the traditional epithet, presented for the first time a systematic and rigorous theory of how the poems were formed of component parts, and how an individual singer could act as a repository for a whole tradition.[11] Although his findings were for a time resisted by scholars who insisted on the literary qualities of Homeric epic, and saw them as incompatible with Parry's emphasis on formulaic economy (a view Parry himself shared, at least up to a point),[12] the theory of a traditional system of language was so rigorously set out that his arguments cannot be convincingly refuted. It is, after all, a matter of fact that for each character we often have just one formula in a particular case and with a particular metrical shape. This makes it seem inevitable that a singer will describe a character in one predictable way, given grammatical case and required metrical length – without paying any attention to immediate literary context. However, the main charge against Parry's findings, that they strip the poems of meaning, has been overcome in more recent scholarship

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[10] Nagy (1979), (1990), Haubold (2000); other examples of this approach are Bergren (1975), Frame (1978), Muellner (1976), (1996), Sacks (1987).
[11] His writings are translated into English and collected in Parry (1971).
[12] Griffin (1980) xiii-xiv presents a vehement rejection of Parry from a literary perspective.

which understands the mechanics of oral poetry as a vehicle for meaning, and not just as metrical building-blocks.[13]

The methodology of part I has also been influenced by interpretations of the Homeric poems which make use of an intertextual or neoanalytical perspective. Although these two schools of thought have been used in the past in such a way as to deny the orality of the poems, their most recent proponents have demonstrated how the oral traditional nature of the poems in fact rewards both these approaches. Early forms of neoanalysis had an explicitly text-based approach which argued that the poet of the *Iliad* had made use of written versions of other poems as sources for his own creation.[14] According to this approach, where it can be seen that a motif is used in two different poems, one of the instances must be identified as derivative, and is marked out as inappropriate or awkward in its secondary context.[15] The earliest examples of this approach focused especially on the relationship between the *Iliad* and the *Aethiopis*, or a hypothetical *Achilleis*, and argued that the funeral of Patroclus in the former was based upon the funeral of Achilles in one of the other, earlier, poems.[16] This type of analysis is inherently problematic, because of its reliance on specific texts and a rigid understanding of how different poems interact with one another; Parry's demonstration of the oral traditional nature of the Homeric poems essentially made this original form of neoanalysis untenable.

In recent decades, there has been more emphasis on the common ground shared by the two very different approaches of neoanalysis and oral theory, and this more complex understanding of interaction within the tradition underlies much of the argumentation presented in this thesis.[17] Both of these two schools of thought share a belief in a long period of pre-Homeric transmission of traditional material; the problems that remain between them concern the question of written texts, and the notion that one instance of a motif must be primary and the other necessarily secondary and derivative. These problems are avoided in a

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[13] Such as those in n.10 above. See also Fenik (1968) and Segal (1971) for examples of how traditional themes operate to create meaning.

[14] Willcock (1997).

[15] Burgess (2006) 159.

[16] Pestalozzi (1945); Kakridis (1949); see also Kullmann (1960), (1981) and (2005). The death and funeral of Patroclus is identified as the secondary instance of several motifs which are less appropriate here than at the funeral of Achilles, like the mourning of the Nereids and Thetis' cradling of Achilles' head in her lap – Kakridis (1949) 65-71. This interpretation is challenged by Kelly (2012).

[17] The joining of the two approaches may now be the best way of approaching the Homeric Question, according to Montanari (2012). Montanari, Rengakos and Tsagalis (2012) brings together a number of arguments for how Neoanalysis and Oral Theory can work together; see also Tsagalis (2010). Burgess (2009) 56 shows awareness of the difficulties faced by an intertextual approach to the Homeric poems – the challenge "is to respect the fluidity of oral circumstances without losing the ability to discern the possible effect of correspondence".

more recent form of neoanalysis, which does not rely on the existence of written texts, but assumes the presence of distinct oral traditions. According to Foley's model of "traditional referentiality", or what Burgess calls "motif transference", the poet of the *Iliad* can refer to other oral traditions, or other elements of the same tradition, which were circulating at the time; rather than word-for-word quotations, the focus is at the level of formulae or narrative patterns.[18] Burgess has argued that this type of "soft" neoanalysis is most successful when it focuses not on the intention of the poet, but the reception of the audience.[19] When an audience hears the use of a motif in one poem that they have heard used elsewhere, they create meaning in the links their reception draws between the different instances. This approach negotiates the difficult problem of primacy, too – some members of the audience will see the motif to be more appropriate in one context, but it is not necessary to identify it as such in order for it to create meaning. This is more in keeping with our understanding of how an oral tradition operates, because it emphasises the movement of a motif, rather than the supremacy of any single text.[20] This "soft" form of neoanalysis can also be called an intertextual approach, as long as it is understood that a "text" can refer to any manifestation of a tradition, even without it being written down. Although the Homeric poems are the main focus of my study in part II, my aim in part I is to present a broader picture, so that the thesis as a whole will be able to explore how Homeric characters situate themselves within that tradition by alluding to or evoking other stories and poems.

Slatkin's *The Power of Thetis* is an illuminating example of how an intertextual approach can help us to access the different levels of allusion and resonance in the Homeric poems' interaction with tradition.[21] Her focus on how an awareness of the whole tradition can help us to understand individual characters, as well as other more wide-ranging intertextual studies such as those of Pucci, can be easily recognised to have influenced aspects of this thesis.[22] However, while Slatkin's study of Thetis argues that the *Iliad* makes use of the wider tradition in order to define itself and its own key themes,[23] my emphasis is

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[18] Foley (1999), Burgess (2006); see Burgess (2009) 61-6 for an evaluation of how motif transference operates in the case of Achilles' death and afterlife. A strong example of this kind of intertextual approach is the work of Barker and Christensen (2011) on the relationship between the Trojan and Theban traditions.

[19] Burgess (2006) 171-3.

[20] Slatkin (2011) 23 considers the lack of a supreme "aboriginal" version of a myth to have been demonstrated by Lévi-Strauss (1969).

[21] Slatkin (1991), reprinted in Slatkin (2011).

[22] Pucci (1987), (1998).

[23] Slatkin (1991) argues throughout that the traditional significance of Thetis is used by the *Iliad* to emphasise its own key themes of Achilles' struggles; the tradition surrounding Thetis is manipulated in order to further the aims of this particular poem.

on how a character is situated within the traditional narrative of cosmic history, so that he or she is shaped and defined by the wider tradition and not just one poem. My study is necessarily based on the surviving texts of the Hesiodic and Homeric poems, but it also shows awareness that these, and Homer especially, were not always the predominant examples of their tradition. Burgess has demonstrated that the tradition of the Trojan war was not dominated by the Homeric poems in the archaic period, and other poems, such as those of the Epic Cycle, were just as influential, initially.[24] Through this thesis, I make use of the available evidence of Homeric and Hesiodic epic, as well as fragments of the Cycle, in order to gain a sense of the broader tradition, without automatically privileging the Homeric perspective. This will mean that the character studies of part II are informed by how they seem to have been presented in the wider tradition; the characters are seen as facing outwards from the text, rather than having their gaze fixed inwardly on the concerns and aims of a particular poem.

A benefit of my approach to the hexameter tradition as an open-ended, yet coherent whole is that it is not affected by problems of dating the poems. Since the work of Kirk and Janko, it is generally accepted that we can construct a relative chronology for the extant poems of Homer and Hesiod, as well as the Homeric hymns, based on the history of the Greek language, and the identification of older or younger forms.[25] However, attempts to pin precise dates on any of the poems are hampered by a lack of consensus about how and in what form they may have first been textualised, as well as the rate of linguistic change, local variation, and the difficulty of fixing at least one absolute date.[26] An intertextual approach based on the tradition, rather than on individual written texts, avoids the problems of primacy and direction of influence which were encountered by early forms of neoanalysis. The shared hexameter tradition, which predates and coexists with any written manifestations, means that considerations of the relative dating of the poems do not affect the way different parts of the tradition interact. Any manifestation which makes use of that tradition is therefore

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[24] Burgess (2001).

[25] Kirk (1962) dates the Homeric poems to the 8th century BC, with the *Iliad* the earlier of the two; Janko (1982) makes use of statistical analysis of the language of the poems in order to place the poems in the order *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Theogony*, *Works and Days*, with a greater gap between the second and third than between the other individual poems.

[26] Precise dating is made almost impossible if we make use of Nagy's evolutionary theory of the poems' transmission, from a fluid, text-less stage in the second millennium BC to the "relatively most rigid" phase of the second century BC; the model is schematised in Nagy (1996) 41-2.

simultaneous and contemporary with all other manifestations, regardless of when a poem was fixed or set in writing.[27]

The purpose of part I is to establish a framework of genealogical history which then informs the character studies of part II. I use a combination of formulaic analysis, intertextual and neoanalytical study of the Hesiodic and Homeric poems in order to identify and examine the shared narrative of history which is embedded in the hexameter tradition. This narrative is shown to be structured by repeated patterns of history which shape and dictate the origins and development of the divine and human world. This builds on the work of Graziosi and Haubold, as well as Clay, bringing into sharper focus the patterns of change which are repeated through time.[28] In chapter 1 I focus on the Hesiodic poems. I examine how the myth of divine succession, as presented in the *Theogony*, presents a clear pattern of gendered antagonism on the issue of procreation and succession. Repeated patterns of behaviour by the male and female gods reveal the inherent and inevitable problem of succession. Zeus' eventual surmounting of this problem emphasises the impossibility of a similar solution for mortals. The repeated pattern of male gods trying to prevent succession by their sons also points to another process of change: moral and social progress. Whereas Ouranos and Kronos use brute physical violence to subdue their sons and heirs, Zeus' final solution is a diplomatic one, whereby he makes use of his clever cunning (literally embodied within him after swallowing his pregnant wife Metis) in order to establish a distribution of honours which ensures his own eternal supremacy. The myth of divine succession therefore reveals an ongoing process of change over time, which is expressed through narrative patterns. I go on to demonstrate that this same process of change is evoked in the *Works and Days*, through the myth of the five races, and in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, through its description of the time of the heroes and the events which led to their extinction. Underlying all these diverse poetic narratives are the same repeated patterns of change. These patterns are seen to be a traditional element of the major Hesiodic poems, which can be drawn upon or invoked in different narrative contexts in order to anchor a particular poem to the wider tradition.

In chapter 2, I conduct an examination of how far the Homeric poems seem to show awareness of a similar traditional process of change. One way this is investigated is by

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[27] This approach can even extend to modern acts of reception; Walcott is therefore able to call himself a "contemporary" of Homer – see Davis (2007).
[28] Clay (2003); Graziosi and Haubold (2005).

analysis of a repeated phrase which is used five times in the *Iliad* to compare certain heroes to men "as they are now" (οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσίν).   I treat this phrase as a formula, according to Parry's definition of a formula as "an expression regularly used, under the same metrical conditions, to express an essential idea".[29]   The "essential idea" of this phrase, I argue, expresses the process of change which has occurred between the generations at Troy and the time of the poet.   I also investigate whether the Homeric poems show awareness of a moment in traditional history which is marked out as significant in the poems of Hesiod and the Cycle, but is not explicitly referred to in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*: the destruction of the heroes by the plan of Zeus.   My approach to this queston is informed by intertextual and neoanalytical analyses such as those of Burgess, Pucci, and Slatkin, but it has the same purpose as my prior analysis of the formulaic phrase; both reveal the traditional process of change which is evoked by the poems.

I close this chapter with a case study of Tydeus and Diomedes, in order to assess whether the large-scale patterns of traditional history really make a difference at the level of individual generations.   I argue that the dynamic between this father and son has great potential to help us understand how genealogical history affects the lives and relationships of individual characters.   While it is easy to oversimplify the similarities and differences between them, as Agamemnon does in his comparison between the two during the Epipolesis, a closer examination reveals a complex relationship between Diomedes and his memory of his father, and so between the present and preceding generations.   The changes that have taken place between these two generations are shown to echo the patterns of change which had been evident in chapter 1.   What is explicit and large-scale in the Hesiodic poems is found to be implicit and small-scale, but equally as significant, in the Homeric.

Part II: Character

In part II of the thesis my focus moves to characterisation.   This section explores how the traditional patterns of genealogical history are reflected in individual characters, and how the presentation of these characters is shaped by those patterns.   Whereas my study of Tydeus and Diomedes in chapter 2 compares the two generations in order to see the effect of these

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[29] Parry (1971) 13. As A. Parry points out in his introduction, this "essential idea" can lead to a negatively reductive understanding of the formula without any deeper meaning or contextual relevance (1971:liv-lv). However, as Nagy and others (see n.7 above) have shown, the "essential idea" can carry important socially-specific meaning.

patterns over a short period of time, chapters 3 and 4 focus more closely still on the impact of traditional history on individual characters. The three characters studied in these chapters exemplify the more general point that the patterns of genealogical history can and do shape a character. Helen, Penelope and Telemachus illustrate this point particularly well because they each exist at points of special significance in that history: Helen at the beginning of the Trojan war era, and Penelope and Telemachus at the very end of that period.

Even aside from the particular issues raised by the Homeric poems in relation to character, issues to which I return below, a coherent critical theory of how characterisation operates in literary texts remains elusive.[30] It is not difficult to define what a character is – narratologists may call it a "storyworld participant" or "an existent endowed with anthropomorphic traits",[31] or we may move outside the world of the text to call a character the "effect" or the "representation of autonomous, unified and self-identical objects".[32] Most readers would understand character in a mimetic sense, as being representative of human or human-like beings, rather than following a non-mimetic understanding of character purely as a function of the text.[33] All mimetic theories of character face one major question, around which many recent discussions of character revolve: what is the relationship between the character and the reader, and how can the former have an emotional or psychological effect on the latter? Non-mimetic theories do not face this problem, because they are based on the notion that the character is nothing but a feature of the text;[34] but mimetic theories take into account the way readers experience character on a personal level. In order for a character to be reflective of a real person, our understanding of them must go beyond the text – the character must be more than the sum of its parts.[35] How exactly this occurs is explained and theorised variously by different interpretations, and in part depends on the historical and cultural context of the interpreter.[36] One way to address the question of how character and

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[30] I here discuss modern theoretical approaches to character; the most programmatic ancient theory is that of Aristotle in his *Poetics* (1454a:14-39). Aristotle takes a clearly mimetic approach, but here *ethos* refers chiefly to the moral standard of a figure and is more relevant to tragedy than epic. I would suggest, along with Frow and Zajko below, that the existence of coherent character must have been an essential factor in the original and enduring popularity and status of the Homeric poems.

[31] Herman, Jahn and Ryan (2005) 52; Prince (1987) 12.

[32] Bal (2009) 112, Frow (1986) 228.

[33] Herman, Jahn and Ryan (2005) 52-7 designates three strands of mimetic interpretation (semantic, cognitive and communicative) and only one of non-mimetic interpretation, but also suggests that it may be possible to integrate the two.

[34] This is the argument for the so-called "affective fallacy", which asserts that subjectivity or audience response is irrelevant due to the independence of the text from both author and reader – see Newton (1988) 39-40, 203.

[35] Frow (1986) 228.

[36] Frow (1986) 238; our culturally-sanctioned notion of what constitutes the "self" is the most important contextual factor. Cixous (1974) advocates that we abandon the notion of character in favour of a new

reader interact is through a psychoanalytic interpretation, which places no clear distinction between the text itself and the "psychic investment" of its readers.[37] Zajko, following Freud's belief that "the effect of literature cannot be explained in terms of content alone", explores how theories of identification and object-relations can cross over from the field of psychoanalysis in order to help us understand how characters can have an impact on our own thoughts and feelings.[38] According to this perspective, much of the emotional investment which readers place in textual characters can be explained by "identification", whereby we either imagine ourselves to be like the character, or we imagine the character to be like ourselves. Zajko's interpretation demonstrates how such a reading is possible even with ancient texts like the *Iliad*; indeed, such "imperishable texts" gain their enduring potency precisely through such a process of trans-historical identification.[39]

A problem with psychoanalytic theories of character is that they can obscure the text itself, and place too much emphasis on subjective responses which will vary from reader to reader. If such an interpretation goes too far in "diagnosing" characters, it risks forgetting that characters are not real people, even if they much resemble them.[40] For this reason, I do not for the most part make use of a psychoanalytic interpretation in my character studies. However, a benefit of Griffin's approach to Homeric character is that he recognises the powerful emotional effect that characters can have on their readers – an interpretation which denies that effect will fail to do anything to explain it, and leave us with one-dimensional character types, which have no capability of evoking an emotional or imaginative response. Most modern interpreters acknowledge the importance of character for the "binding-in" of the reader, even going so far as to say that there is "no possibility of a nonanthropomorphic fiction".[41] As any study of character must do, my study aims to strike a balance between remaining focused on the evidence of the text, and taking into account the responses of the audience.[42] My character studies therefore necessarily contain an element of subjectivity, but

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discussion of subjectivity, but this should be seen as a reaction against the prevailing conservative trend in the literary criticism of her time, and is not so relevant now, when the discussion of character is gaining new popularity. Zajko (2006) explains how this is a reaction against the conservative criticism of the mid-twentieth century, but adds that we can still learn from Cixous to remember the unpredictability of the unconscious, and our own reactions to texts. Murphet (2007) senses a gathering interest in the question of character at the start of the twenty-first century.

[37] Zajko (2006) 80. See also the arguments of Holland, Bloom and Felman in Newton (1988).

[38] Zajko (2006), quoting Freud at 81.

[39] Zajko (2006) 80-1.

[40] Bal (2009) 113 warns that this can result in "flat realism".

[41] Frow (1986) 248.

[42] Bal (2009) 126-7 explains the various ways we gather information from a text, and the importance of making use of that data.

that should not be surprising. As Surmelian and Bal warn, it is inevitable that some aspects of character will resist analysis, if they are to be at all reflective of real people – the human personality "is a universe in itself and we are strangers even to ourselves".[43]

As explained in the first part of this Introduction, Homeric scholarship has mostly succeeded in casting off the divisions between oral and literary, analyst and unitarian interpretations, which had defined the field in past decades and centuries. However, the study of characterisation in the Homeric poems is one area which can still seem problematic. This thesis aims to reconcile the traditional nature of the poems with a more literary approach to character. Some Homerists flatly deny the possibility of full and meaningful characterisation in the poems.[44] Kirk asserts that the depiction of character "is limited both by the technique and aims of oral poetry and by the simplicity of heroic virtues and vices".[45] Notopoulos notes the disappointing "absence of individual realism in Homer's characters", and, most recently, Silk marks out Achilles as "special" not just as being non-representative of Homeric man, but as being the one and only figure in the *Iliad* who is deeply and consistently characterised.[46] Such denials of Homeric characterisation are addressed and refuted by Griffin, who set out to demonstrate that the characters of the poems are not only clearly individualised in their differences from one another, but also that they are complex and multi-faceted.[47] Griffin's appreciation of Homeric character has much to recommend it, and it does seem to be reflective of many readers' instinctive reaction to the poems, who find in them moving and engaging presentations of individuals. However, there are certain problems with Griffin's approach which this thesis aims to address.[48] His polemically literary interpretation of the *Iliad* in *Homer on Life and Death* did not meet with the approval of some reviewers: Bowie called it subjective and anachronistic, while Lynn-George was harsher, calling the book "depressingly reactionary", "ineffective", and part of a "moribund

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[43] Surmelian (1968) 139; Bal (2009) 119.

[44] Snell (1960) even denied that Homeric characters have coherent bodies. His arguments, and those of Adkins (1970), that the Homeric poems demonstrate no concept of the self, and that Homeric characters cannot make decisions, are refuted by Gaskin and Lesky, both in Cairns (2001); see also Gill (1996).

[45] Kirk (1962) 265.

[46] Notopoulos (1950) 29; Silk (2004) 76-85.

[47] In particular, they can be seen to intend things which they do not explicitly reveal as their intention, which is strongly suggestive of a psychological depth to the characters beyond what is laid out in the text - Griffin (1980) 50-80.

[48] One such problem is that Griffin remains committed to the notion of a single creative genius behind the poems, which undermines the capabilities of a coherent tradition to produce coherent characters. Burgess (2001) 4-5 argues that there is no need to attribute the Homeric poems to a single master poet even while believing in their unity and sophistication – such is the strength of the tradition. See also Finkelberg (2012).

poetics".[49] Such criticisms are reflective of how far Griffin had departed from, and indeed fought against, the prevailing approach of Homeric scholarship in the decades since Parry. His rejection of Parry's research as useful only "on its own technical ground"[50] is not tenable, in my view, because we have seen ample evidence of the huge rewards reaped from Parry's findings in so many aspects of Homeric interpretation. The challenge for any new study of Homeric characterisation, therefore, is to demonstrate how full and coherent characters can be drawn in the context of oral traditional poetry. I aim to show in this thesis that the oral traditional nature of the poems actually contributes to characterisation, and helps us to understand how it operates.

Previous studies show the value of interpreting a specific character in the context of the wider tradition.[51] Burgess' study of the death and afterlife of Achilles is in essence a case-study of how the pre-Homeric narrative epic tradition may have operated, and how the Homeric poems allude to or make use of that tradition.[52] Importantly for my work, Burgess demonstrates the capability of that tradition to contain coherent and unified characters such as Achilles, which remain consistent through different manifestations. Burgess does not concern himself with the emotional power or pathos of a character as Griffin does; for Burgess, "characterisation" really means "a stable mythological tradition".[53] Burgess' methodology can be seen to have particularly influenced my study of Diomedes and Tydeus in chapter 2, in which I consider how the interaction of different poetic traditions (the Trojan and the Theban) can inform the presentation of specific characters. However, I combine this approach with a more literary, and psychological, understanding of characterisation: as I have argued above, trans-historical identification is an essential contributor to the enduring potency of any literature.[54] In this respect, my study takes a similar approach to Zanker in his interpretation of Achilles, which is informed by an examination of the value-system of the *Iliad* in order to understand his character in that moral context.[55] Zanker offers a useful argument for the importance of such studies, saying that "Homer encourages us to meditate on what the inner life of his characters might be"; it is up to us to find the clues given by the

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[49] Bowie (1981); Lynn-George (1982).
[50] Griffin (1980) xiii-xiv.
[51] Graziosi and Haubold (2004) argue that Achilles and Odysseus trace, in their own life experiences, a more general development towards cooperation and consensus in the tradition. Slatkin's (1991) study of Thetis is based on the presentation of this character in the tradition, as discussed above in this chapter.
[52] Burgess (2009).
[53] Burgess (2009).
[54] As demonstrated by Zajko (2006).
[55] Zanker (1994). Gill (1990) 9-17 argues that in order to evaluate a character at all, we must be able to place them in a determinate ethical framework; otherwise we are evaluating them only as a "personality".

poems' text, and use them to build a coherent picture of the character that goes beyond what is explicitly said.[56] As Taplin argues, characterisation should not be regarded as a separate and independent strand of interpretation; rather, "it is distilled from an interpretation or complex of interpretations".[57] In this thesis, the character studies presented in part II are based on the interpretation of the hexameter poems and tradition presented in part I. My studies of individual Homeric characters do not stand alone, but are dependent upon the traditional patterns of genealogical history which I argue are embedded in the poems. Rather than being a separate strand of interpretation, they are a direct result of reading the poems in the context of that traditional narrative.

My first character study, in chapter 3, focuses on Helen. Here, I argue that Helen's unique significance in the traditional narrative of genealogical history clarifies and explains the traits in her characterisation which can cause conflict or confusion in interpretations of her. Interpreters often note that Helen in the *Iliad* seems to be detached from the events and people surrounding her, to the point that she sometimes seems to be taking on the role of poet as she passively observes the action.[58] However, this detachment is not often seen to define her characterisation or be reflective of her inner emotional state. In my study of Helen, I argue that her detached perspective is intimately linked with other traits of her character – her self-hatred and isolation – and that all of these are the result of her position in genealogical history. I argue that the Homeric Helen is defined by her role as an instrument in Zeus' plan to destroy the race of heroes, and that she is therefore unable to form any meaningful human relationships. I survey the evidence from Homer, Hesiod and the Epic Cycle in order to demonstrate that we are never given a clear impression of her parentage and family. This genealogical isolation is compounded by her lack of social and geographical belonging, as she is at home with neither the Greeks nor the Trojans. Furthermore, her role as a divine instrument means she does not fully fit in with gods or humans. The figure of Helen has been much studied as a symbol of destructive beauty, stretching across diverse cultures, but it has not always been understood that the Helen of the epic tradition is distinct from presentations

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[56] Zanker (1994) 43-5.
[57] Taplin (1990) 60.
[58] Helen's detached perspective has been commented upon by Clader (1976) 2-24, Pantelia (2002) and Taplin (1992) 96-103. Elmer (2005) 32 argues that Helen's use of poetry has been too narrowly understood, as a reflection of the epic bard's art – her use of poetry is much more diverse than that, and contains more epigrammatic than epic reflections. Graver (1995) argues that Helen's opinion of herself is reflective of an alternative tradition which does blame her; the *Iliad* is aware of this tradition but does not follow it.

of her in other poetic genres.[59] In this chapter, I argue that the Homeric Helen can only be fully understood in the context of the traditional epic narrative of history, and that when we understand her significance in that narrative, we gain a better understanding of her defining traits of isolation and detachment.

Following this, chapter 4 focuses on the *Odyssey*, and in particular on the two figures of Penelope and Telemachus as they cope with the various problems caused first by Odysseus' absence and then by his return. Whereas my previous chapters trace the patterns of genealogical history which can be seen to shape individual poems and characters, this final chapter demonstrates what happens when those patterns are delayed or frustrated. While Helen's birth marks the beginning of the Trojan era of traditional history, Penelope and Telemachus exist at the very end of that era, and they are defined by that positioning. Events on Ithaca in the early books of the *Odyssey* present a household, a family and a whole society in a state of limbo; no progress or succession can take place because the normal patterns of history are in conflict with the narrative necessity of Odysseus' return. This absence of the normal process of change is not restricted to Ithaca, either. I consider how the narrative of Telemachus' travels presents both the young prince, and the audience, with varying pictures of domestic life, none of which represents the ideal model of genealogical progress and succession. In contrast with the gods and monsters encountered by Odysseus in his travels, the situation on Ithaca seems to represent a world much like our own, and Odysseus' return to his rightful home can be seen as an idealised representation of domestic life. However, I argue in this chapter that life on Ithaca is defined by a particular moment in time at the end of the time of the heroes. I demonstrate that the important family trait of Laertes, Odysseus and Telemachus all being only sons actually presents a problematic picture of family life, and the final battle in which all three generations fight together is read as a distortion of the generational conflict which is presented in the myth of divine succession. As the normal patterns of change do not occur in this poem, the household of Odysseus' family does not function in a normal way. For Telemachus, this means that his character is defined by his frustrated maturity, as he is trapped in an intermediary state between childhood and adulthood.[60]

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[59] The most prominent recent studies of Helen are Austin (1994), Blondell (2013), Clader (1976), Suzuki (1989).

[60] Many studies of Telemachus concern his transition from adolescence into manhood – see Austin (1969), Jones (1988), Schmiel (1972), and Wörhle (1999), which examines the ideology of manliness in the Homeric world.

All this has relevance for the character of Penelope because it is she who has been working so hard to prevent change in the household, in effect "freezing" time in Odysseus' absence.[61] Rather than being a passively loyal wife, I show how Penelope has been actively working to maintain a state of limbo in her household, reflected not just in her famous trick of the shroud, but in her repeated scenes of retiring and sleeping in her room, and her reiterated wishes for death in preference to remarriage. While Telemachus is defined by his frustrated social role, Penelope is shown to be defined by her relentless efforts to prevent and forestall any type of change. While both of these defining traits are rendered necessary by the imperative of Odysseus' return, they do not reflect the traditional patterns of genealogical history. A tension therefore arises between the traditional pattern of ongoing and inevitable change, involving defined gender roles, and the poem's own concern with, and drive towards, Odysseus' *nostos*. This tension plays out in the poem's narrative teases, which suggest the possibility of other courses of action: that Penelope will remarry, or that Telemachus will succeed his father before he returns.

I show in my final chapter how the *Odyssey* treads a narrow dividing line between the normal patterns of tradition and the essential imperative of this one poem. The event of Odysseus' return must eventually win out, and this means we are left without any solutions to the problems the poem has raised. Throughout, the poem presents a family in crisis, and the issues they face seem to be caused by the perennial challenges of change and succession. However, at the end of the poem we are given no answer to those problems, because the resolution imposed by Athene is not in keeping with the patterns of traditional history. This chapter argues that the *Odyssey* breaks away from the traditional narrative of cosmic and genealogical history, and at the same time demonstrates the importance of that narrative. Without normal processes of change and succession, society disintegrates, and individual characters like Penelope and Telemachus become resistant to interpretation or identification. In the poem, problems of succession and change are solved arbitrarily, and violently, with the support of Athene. That no such solutions are available in the present time of the audience emphasises the crucial importance of the normal patterns of change, which are as inevitable as our own mortality and separation from the gods.

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[61] Foley (1978) describes Penelope as "freezing" her sexuality in the absence of Odysseus. Many studies of Penelope do not go much further than trying to find rational explanations for her often baffling behaviour; see Levine (1983) on her laugh, Rozokoki (2001) on one of her dreams, and Zerba (2009) on the question of exactly how much she knows about Odysseus' plan and disguise.

The arguments of my thesis demonstrate that the oral traditional nature of the Homeric poems does not rule out the possibility of interpreting them in many of the same ways as a work of an explicitly literary nature. I show that the same depth of characterisation can be identified in the Homeric poems as we would expect to see in the greatest of written narratives; the conventions and patterns of the hexameter form do not prevent a poem from presenting realistic, individualised characters with mimetic psychological depth. More than this, I demonstrate that the traditional structures of hexameter poetry – in particular the shared patterns of cosmic and genealogical history – actively shape and form the characters we find in individual poems. Not only are the oral and the literary aspects of the poems far from mutually exclusive, but they are interdependent, even to the level of detailed characterisation. This interdependence is one reason why the Homeric poems are still capable of speaking to us today, despite their obscure origins in a poetic culture very much unlike our own.

Part I: Patterns of Genealogical History

1: The Hesiodic Poems

The purpose of this first part of my thesis is to investigate the extent to which we can discern a pattern or structure of history in the poems of the early hexameter corpus. This is necessary in order to demonstrate, in the second part of the thesis, how these big structures affect the portrayal of individual Homeric characters. To this end, my first chapter examines the language and narrative of the Hesiodic poems in order to assess whether they seem to contain a broadly consistent conception of the history of the cosmos, and how much this is structured by ongoing patterns of change over time. As outlined in the Introduction, mine is an approach which takes the hexameter tradition as a largely coherent whole, and which considers how a single poem or story can be received as part of that wider body of epic.[1] Rather than issues of dating, composition, and textualisation, I focus on the possible response of early audiences. Indeed, the Hesiodic corpus functions as a useful example of how these two differing approaches can affect our reading of hexameter poetry. If we are concerned with issues of dating, the two Hesiodic poems may show the personal progression of the poet through his career, so that the later poem (*Works and Days*) can be seen to correct the earlier (*Theogony*).[2] However, if our priority is to understand how texts may be received by their audience, the two poems can be seen as a diptych, two halves of a whole, which involves challenge and contradiction. This second option is championed by Clay in her study of the Hesiodic poems, and the illuminating results of her analysis show that this can be a useful way of reading them.[3] As Clay herself puts it, such an approach reveals "a denser, more complex, and finally more interesting relationship" between the poems.[4] With this in mind, my aim in this chapter is not to identify instances of specific intertextuality between the Hesiodic poems, but to mark out the broad patterns and structures which can be seen to lie underneath the different narratives. These patterns may then be called traditional, in the

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[1] For this reason some tools of intertextual analysis and neoanalysis are used; see Introduction.
[2] Most (1993) 76, as an example of this approach, sees "an unequivocal and necessary temporal succession" between the two poems.
[3] Clay (2003).
[4] Clay (2003) 6-8 explains the strength of such an intertextual approach and provides examples from the text of the poems.

sense that they can surface in different poems with variant narrative concerns, and remain recognisably the same.[5]

As others have acknowledged, the Hesiodic poems take a macrocosmic perspective on divine and human history.[6] For this reason, I treat these poems first, before moving on to the narrower perspective of the Homeric poems in the next chapter. I begin my study with the *Theogony*, because it has the most all-encompassing perspective of all the Hesiodic poems, and I consider how much the myth of divine succession in that poem contains repeated patterns of change which have relevance to the human as well as the divine sphere. This is followed by an examination of a section of the *Works and Days* which takes a different viewpoint on human history: the myth of the five races. I use this passage to investigate the extent to which the two poems seem to contain a similar conception of divine and human history, despite their differences in narrative and perspective. These two poems form the core of the Hesiodic corpus, but in this chapter I also turn my attention to the *Catalogue of Women*, which was considered Hesiodic in antiquity.[7] Although this fragmentary poem suffers questions over its dating and authenticity, I aim to demonstrate that it should be regarded as part of the same tradition as the previous two poems, given that it presents a broadly consistent conception of how the gods and mankind have changed and developed over time.

As its title suggests, the *Theogony* tells of the births of the gods, but not just the Olympian gods which are familiar from Homer and later tradition; the poem describes the beginnings of the world itself, all forms of matter and all elemental forces within it, starting from the chasm of nothingness which is called Chaos. The poem is therefore about generation in the most primal sense, and the continuous line of births from beginning to end is its main structuring device. The *Theogony* as a whole can be divided into the genealogies of the gods as they are born, which run on a broadly chronological scheme through the poem, and the myth of succession, which is split into sections and inserted into the genealogy. The myth of divine succession describes how the male patriarch in each generation of the gods attempts to maintain his power indefinitely by preventing the birth of his own heirs. The complex interrelation of the different elements of the narrative in the *Theogony* has led to a large

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[5] I use "tradition" here in the sense that it is like a language, following Foley (1999); see Introduction.
[6] As Clay (2003) 2 says of Hesiod, "the range of his vision – from Chaos to nail-clippings – has no parallel in ancient literature". See Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 35-43.
[7] The issues surrounding the date and authenticity of this poem will be addressed later in this chapter.

number of studies focusing on the narrative structure, rather than the content, of this poem.[8] In such studies, the myth of succession is marked out as separate from the rest of the narrative. However, although it is the genealogies that make up the bulk of the lines of the poem, the succession myth is a vital complement to them, causing West to call the myth the "backbone" of the poem, and Clay to call it the "armature".[9] The first section of this chapter considers the significance of the repeated themes and patterns of behaviour which can be found in the myth, and whether it may form a programmatic depiction of how the sexes react differently to the patterns of genealogical history.

One repeated motif which has already been noticed by Clay is that, in each episode of the succession myth, the male agent acts to prevent generational change, whereas the female promotes change and favours her male child over his father.[10] This is evident in the first episode of the myth, when Ouranos prevents the birth of his children from Gaia by confining them within her womb, and, it is suggested, blocking the birth passage with frequent sex (*Theogony* 154-9).[11] We are given no reason for his wish to prevent their birth – his hatred of them is innate, "from the beginning" (ἐξ ἀρχῆς 156). Gaia, in immense pain, urges her children to take revenge on their father from within her womb, and fashions a giant sickle for the deed (159-64).[12] Kronos, the youngest, is the only child to volunteer his services, and when Ouranos next spreads himself over Gaia, he cuts off his father's genitals – literally

[8] Hamilton (1989) 4-9 gives a useful summary of the principle interpretations of this structure, including those of Brown (1953), Walcot (1966) and West (1966). Muellner (1996) gives a thorough and illuminating syntactic analysis of the poem, based upon the methodology of Jacopin; see explanation of this methodology at (1996) 53-4. The other main focus of interpretations of this poem has been the presence and significance of parallels with Near-Eastern texts; while these studies are important for helping us understand the wider cultural context in which these poems may have been formed, they do not have any direct relevance to the aims of my thesis. The most comprehensive surveys of such parallels are found in Walcot (1966) and West (1966) 18-31, who also gives a bibliography of preceding studies at 106-7. The preeminent examples of this approach to Greek myth in general are those of Burkert (1992) and West (1997). See also Mondi (1984) and van Dongen (2011) on the "Kingship-in-Heaven Theme", and López-Ruiz (2010) for the most recent picture of a multi-cultural, bilingual society lying behind the extant poems, in which ideas and stories could be freely and gradually exchanged and assimilated.

[9] West (1966) 31; Clay (2003) 13. Thalmann (1984) 38-42 sees the importance of the succession myth's linear progression, which offsets the complex ring-composition of the rest of the narrative, and also serves to highlight the supremacy of Zeus, as the poem stresses forward movement towards the present time.

[10] Clay (2003) 17-18 identifies this clash between male and female as the central conflict of the myth: "the history of the gods as a whole can be viewed as an account of the various attempts on the part of the supreme male god to control and block the female procreative drive in order to bring about a stable cosmic regime" (18).

[11] Muellner (1996) 61 describes Ouranos' confinement of the children as "an attempt to invent death for his immortal children".

[12] Pucci (2009) 46 points out that Gaia's fecundity is emphasised in her creation of the weapon from within herself; as a female she can only create, she cannot destroy, and so she must find a male to take the decisive action.

"reaping" (ἤμησε 181), appropriately to his instrument.[13] Here, the divide between mother and father is clear, and they have diametrically opposing views on procreation and succession. Surprisingly, given the violence of the scene, two terms of affection are used to describe the relationship between children and parents: when Gaia shows the adamantine sickle to her children, they are called παισὶ φίλοισιν, "dear children" (162), and when Kronos replies, she is called μητέρα κεδνήν, "excellent, cherished mother" (169).[14] Even more surprising is that Ouranos is called φίλου … πατρός ("dear father") when Kronos castrates him (180). While it makes sense for affection to be suggested between Gaia and Kronos, who have conspired together, it is patently clear that Kronos does not consider his father as "dear" in any way. Precisely because of passages such as these, where the emotive form of φίλος seems to be inappropriate, this term is sometimes translated as a simple possessive. However, when we take it in combination with κεδνήν, we cannot discount the emotional force of the language being used here. This is illustrative of how the traditional formulaic language of epic can sometimes seem to be at odds with the immediate situation; an obvious example is when "swift-footed Achilles" spends large portions of the *Iliad* refusing to move.[15]   However, in this case, the language of family affection, or even just of simply belonging (if we translate with a possessive) is highlighting how wrong the behaviour of the gods is. These emotive words are also suggestive of the human relationship between mother and child, and make the gods at this point seem anthropomorphic despite their extraordinary actions. The common application of φίλος to describe a mother or father emphasises their wickedness and makes their acts more shocking by their implied humanisation.

As well as violently disabling Ouranos and preventing him from terrorising Gaia, Kronos' deed has further consequences. As he casts the genitals away, the drops of blood they spill give life to the Erinyes, the Giants and the Nymphs:[16] they are born "with the turning of the years" (περιπλομένων δ᾽ ἐνιαυτῶν 184), which is suggestive of the seasonal nature of the crop harvest, matching Kronos' "reaping" of the genitals. A similar phrase is used near the beginning of the poem to denote the full term of a woman's pregnancy: after Zeus lies with Mnemosyne, she bears her children "when a year had passed as the seasons came round and the months perished" (ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δή ῥ᾽ ἐνιαυτὸς ἔην, περὶ δ᾽ ἔτραπον ὧραι |

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[13] Clay (2003) 17 points out a possible wordplay here between λόχος, "ambush", and the root λοχ-, "relating to childbirth".

[14] For κεδνήν, Most (2006) translates "cherished"; West (1988) gives "good".

[15] On this example in particular see Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 51-3.

[16] Thalmann (1984) 43 suggests that the birth of the Erinyes marks the beginning of a "family curse" which will necessitate vengeance in the succeeding generations.

μηνῶν φθινόντων 58-9). This similarity of language is disturbing in the way it normalises the horrific action of Kronos by likening it to the natural pattern of the seasons or the natural gestation of a pregnancy. It seems to be suggested that the deposing of Ouranos was inevitable natural progression, and not the violent act of anarchy which it first seems. What happens naturally in the vegetal and human world – where death and succession are unavoidable – is achieved through violence among the immortal gods.

As well as the generation of the Erinyes, the Giants, and the Nymphs from the blood of Ouranos, the violent act of Kronos instigates one further significant birth. When Ouranos' severed genitals fall into the sea, the foam that builds up around them gives birth to Aphrodite. The significance of this account of her birth is that Ouranos' genitals are used to procreate against his will in punishment for his attempt to prevent procreation.[17] The vengeance is even more fitting because it produces Aphrodite, who will ensure that gods and men continue to procreate sexually and continually disrupt the patriarchal stability that Ouranos had tried to maintain. The procreation of new and disruptive generations is shown to be an unstoppable force, which the best efforts of Ouranos have failed to prevent.

The myth of succession resumes at line 453, as Kronos, now the preeminent god, sires several children on Rheia. Once again, the male tries to prevent succession, this time by swallowing each of the children as they are born (459-62).[18] This tactic, although following the same principle, shows some progression from Ouranos' behaviour; Kronos has built upon and improved his father's tactic. We can see some gruesome form of logic in Kronos' tactical development: with the children still within their mother, they can act against him, but if they are inside his own body then they cannot rebel. However, we can expect from the previous episode of the myth that the female will act to protect her offspring and promote change, and Rheia does so with the help of her mother, Gaia, who advises her to hide her youngest baby, Zeus, on the island of Crete. To trick Kronos, she wraps a rock in swaddling clothes and he swallows it. Once again using similar phrasing to that used to describe a natural pregnancy, after a year has passed (ἐπιπλομένου δ᾽ ἐνιαυτοῦ 493), Kronos vomits up the rock, and then all the children he had swallowed before. He had tried to override the female urge to procreate by reversing the birth of each child as they left her womb and

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[17] The Hesiodic account differs from that implied by the Homeric poems, in which Aphrodite is called the daughter of Zeus in order to fit into the stable Olympian scheme. Hesiod bolsters his version of her origin by etymologising both her name and her traditional epithet φιλομμειδής in relation to his own story. See Clay (1989) on the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*.

[18] Arthur (1973) 24 describes the male and female in this myth as being "locked into a cycle of victory and defeat". Similarly, Clay (2003) 17 refers to "a vicious and apparently endless circle of crime and punishment".

imprisoning them in his own stomach, but the cunning of the mother, and grandmother, ensure the succession of the youngest son, Zeus. The use of phrasing associated with a woman's pregnancy once again reinforces the natural inevitability of childbirth and procreation, despite Kronos' best attempts to prevent it.

The final episode of the succession myth comes after Zeus has defeated the Titans, and lastly the monstrous Typhoeus. In defeating Typhoeus, he has also subdued Gaia, who had supported her newest son, fathered by Tartarus (821-2).[19] As Zeus destroys Typhoeus, Gaia groans (841, 858) and eventually burns and melts like hot metal (861-7). Gaia had helped each generation to overthrow and succeed the previous one, but now that Zeus has subdued her and taken away her vitality, she cannot help to unseat him. Instead, she now advises or prophesies to him about how to maintain the stability he has secured. It is according to her advice that Zeus divides honours among all the gods, creating a balance of power that decreases the chance of mutiny. The subordination of Gaia to Zeus is Zeus' first step towards achieving permanent sovereignty; that permanent state will be reached when he has similarly subdued all the divine females.[20] It is also his first move away from the violent tactics of his father and grandfather; Zeus instead tames Gaia in order to make use of her knowledge and cunning. He still faces the same risk as his father and grandfather, though, that his own children will depose him. He overcomes this problem by outdoing the attempts of previous generations, and swallowing his wife, Metis, before she has given birth (889-93). As well as preventing the births of the twins, male and female, who are about to be born, Zeus incorporates within himself the very essence of cunning and wisdom; no female will be able to use these tools against him as previous generations of females have, as Metis can advise him from within about good and evil (900).[21] The roles of male and female have not changed, but Zeus now has the female principle of procreation imprisoned within himself; this most dangerous aspect of the female is now under male control.[22] Therefore, it is in his power to give or deny birth to the twins in Metis' womb – and he does not allow the birth of the male, who is destined to overthrow him and become "king of gods and men" (θεῶν

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[19] More on the significance of Typhoeus below.

[20] Arthur (1982) 63 calls this "the redefinition of the family triad so as to achieve stasis through the hierarchy which subordinates female to male". An important aspect of this subordination, according to Arthur, is the birth of three daughters – Aphrodite, Styx and Hecate – who each represent one constituent part of Gaia's power, but are all individually subordinate to Zeus (71).

[21] This is where West (1966) 398-9 believes the genuine *Theogony* of Hesiod should end. Arguments about the authenticity of the final section of this poem are largely connected to the authenticity of the *Catalogue of Women*, which positions itself as a sequel to the *Theogony*. See the below section on the creation of the heroes.

[22] Arthur (1982) 71-2. West (1966) 401 calls the myth "a crude aition" for Zeus' epithets which mention the quality of *metis* (μητίετα Ζεύς, Δία μητιόεντα, Διὶ μῆτιν ἀτάλαντος)

βασιλῆα καὶ ἀνδρῶν 897), but only the female, Athene.[23] She is born from his head (924), and is therefore identified solely with her father and not her mother. Like Aphrodite being born from her father's severed genitals, the manner of Athene's birth reflects her unique divine role.[24] Emerging from Zeus' head in particular suggests that she is an embodiment of his mind and will, a quality which is suggested by their relationship in the Homeric poems, where they are usually of one mind.[25] Zeus' tactic of swallowing Metis and allowing only the birth of his loyal daughter ensures that his own power will remain unchallenged, achieving the stability that his father and grandfather had failed to attain.

From this summary it is clear that the antagonism between male and female is a key feature of the myth of succession; not only procreation, but the tensions that come along with it, are shown to be inevitable. To this extent we may be justified in calling the myth a programmatic depiction of change, the patterns of which may be replicated elsewhere, on the human level. Importantly, the narration also contains explicit moral judgements on the actions of the gods, through the words used to describe their actions. Ouranos' plan to confine his children within Gaia's womb is called an "evil deed" (κακῷ … ἔργῳ 158), and he is condemned for "rejoicing" in it (ἐπετέρπετο 158). Gaia's revenge is also called "an evil scheme" (κακὴν … τέχνην 160), but she and her son justify it because Ouranos had been the first to do such evil (166, 172): so here we have the primitive morality of revenge. Similarly, when Kronos swallows his children he is called σχέτλιος – "bold, wicked" (488). These deeds are characterised as unequivocally evil. Zeus' tactic of swallowing Metis, however, is achieved not by violence but by "craft" and "guileful words" (δόλῳ … αἱμυλίοισι λόγοισιν 889-90), and is not accompanied by any of the moral judgements found in the previous episodes. This may be because Zeus' act is successful, and achieves stability, whereas the previous acts resulted in further violence and evil. It is clear from earlier in the poem that Zeus' eventual supremacy is inevitable – at his birth he is already called "father of gods and men" (θεῶν πατέρ᾽ ἠδὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν 457), and Kronos is aware of a prophecy that he will be overpowered by his own son, "through the plans of great Zeus" (Διὸς μεγάλου διὰ βουλάς 465), before the latter is even born. Zeus' usurpation of his father is not cast in the wicked

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[23] This notion, of a son being born to Zeus who will be able to overthrow him, resurfaces in the tradition of Thetis and Achilles – see Slatkin (1991).

[24] Arthur (1982) 66-7.

[25] Although Athene is capable of acting against her father, they are usually in agreement and act accordingly, as demonstrated by the repeated phrase ὣς εἰπὼν ὄτρυνε πάρος μεμαυῖαν Ἀθήνην - "So [Zeus] spoke, urging on Athene, who was already eager" (*Il.* 4.73, 19.359, 22.186). Their relationship is also emphasised by her epithet κούρη Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο "daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus" (8.384) which suggests that she is complicit in his supremacy.

light that Kronos' own accession was; instead, Kronos is "defeated by the strength and the devices of his own son" (νικηθεὶς τέχνῃσι βίηφί τε παιδὸς ἑοῖο 496). The inevitability of Zeus' kingship may explain why the poem does not pass moral judgement on his actions. Moral disapproval is important in the previous episodes to justify revenge, but now that no revenge is possible, there is no reason for us to see Zeus' acts as evil. Furthermore, if the poet and his ancient audience regard Zeus as the king of the gods in their own time, a moral judgement on his actions may be thought of as dangerous. The way Zeus' eventual victory is described makes him unchallengeable, and simultaneously emphasises the impossibility of such a solution for human patriarchs.[26]

Another moralising aspect of the myth may be found in the changing tactics used by the male gods to cement their power. Here it is possible to see a pattern of development from Ouranos' reliance on violence, to Zeus' distribution of power, and forging of alliances – Arthur calls this "a moral evolution which makes the reign of Zeus homologous with justice".[27] As well as the evolution of justice, there is a subtle change in the type of violence used by the male gods. The actions of Ouranos and Kronos are primitive, as suggested by their use of bodily aggression (confining the children in the womb or in the stomach), whereas Zeus is more sophisticated, making use of political alliances to defeat the Titans, and enlisting the help of the Giants in what more closely resembles organised warfare. His final defeat of Typhoeus can be seen as a victory of order over disorder – the monster is physically and verbally disordered, with many heads which make many sounds (823-35), and after death he is the source of the disruptive winds which cause disorder at sea and on land (869-80). Once Zeus has defeated him, he can establish order; his marriage to Themis, and birth of their children (including Dike), signify the central importance of justice in this new regime. The increase of justice is also implied by the corresponding decrease in violence; this is why the text does not seem to condemn the behaviour of Zeus, because he uses "guileful words" to achieve his aims rather than force alone.[28] Through the generations of the divine family, the interactions between members have become more sophisticated, and the final picture of Olympian stability presents the family as an alliance, albeit with Zeus as the supreme head of

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[26] van Dongen (2011) 191 sees that the telling of the succession myth in the *Theogony* emphasises the supremacy of Zeus, but does not offer any detailed examination of how or why Zeus succeeds where his father and grandfather failed; I address this is the following paragraphs.
[27] Arthur (1982) 63.
[28] Arthur (1982) 63 reads Zeus' distribution of responsibilities between the gods as a kind of gift-exchange.

that alliance.[29] Overall, we can detect social and moral progress in the myth's portrayal of the gods, taking us from the primal forces of Ouranos and Gaia to the anthropomorphic figures of the Olympian gods as we can recognise them from the Homeric poems.[30] Through repeated patterns of male and female behaviour, we can trace progression and development from primal violence through to diplomatic policy and appeasement. This process is an essential aspect of the myth, and the stability which is eventually reached.

Alongside this progress, the myth illustrates the tensions that arise from natural succession and change. The anthropomorphic portrayal of the gods, and the strong sense of the inevitability of change, makes it possible that similar problems will also be faced by mankind. As Clay stresses,[31] these tensions are strongly gendered: the female contains within her the ability to procreate, and always favours the youngest child to have been born from her; the male views procreation as a threat to his own stability and therefore tries to contain or eliminate the female generative principle. For the gods, this conflict is circumnavigated when Zeus puts in place a permanent solution, which makes impossible the birth of a challenger to his supremacy.[32] For men, however, our mortality makes this kind of solution impossible. All human patriarchs must face up to the fact of their own death, and the necessity of succession. The divine solution is permanent, but it is paradoxical, and certainly no model for human society.[33] The myth of divine succession suggests that the tensions felt by the male and female gods may well be reflected in their human counterparts; however, men and women will not be able to reach the same solution as the gods. For mortals, genealogical change is an essential driving force which cannot be contained; we must find our own way of dealing with its problems. We are given a hint as to what a possible solution may be from the moral progression which is discernible in the myth – Zeus' reign is only possible with the use of his cunning mind, in the presence of justice. As we now move on to

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[29] Although the text refers to Zeus' distribution of honours among the gods (885), the specifics of this distribution are not detailed. Clay (2003) 28 suggests that this is because the topic was covered in another type of hexameter poetry, the Hymns.

[30] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 70-1 point to the "incessant feasting" of the Homeric gods as a replacement for confrontation; the distribution of food and drink is a reflection of the fair distribution of honours among the group. Knowing that they cannot challenge the power of Zeus, they are left to a life characterised by leisure.

[31] Clay (2003) 17-8.

[32] It may be too strong to state that the gods solve the problems of succession; the actions of Zeus are really just a way around those problems. Their continuing care for their mortal descendants (as illustrated in the *Iliad*) demonstrates that such conflict is not removed altogether from the divine sphere – it is just displaced.

[33] Arthur (1982) 78 calls this "a paradox of generation without succession"; Zeus is a ruler who "embodies the tensions and struggles of the succession-myth while at the same time transcending them". While Zeus has removed the threat of succession, he cannot remove the urge to procreate, the outlet for which is the generation of the heroes: see Clay (2003) 30. See below in this chapter.

consider the development of mankind in the Hesiodic poems, we should remember the importance of this progression from physical violence to the use of justice and cunning.

The *Works and Days* differs in perspective from the *Theogony* – while the latter takes as its focus the divine sphere and the formation of the Olympian hierarchy, the former takes the viewpoint of the human world.[34] In one particular passage of the *Works and Days* we are presented with the most strikingly programmatic of all Hesiodic accounts of the history and development of mankind. The myth of the five races[35] has been called "the human myth of succession", as it can be seen to fulfil the same purpose as the myth of the *Theogony*.[36] It seemingly gives the clearest depiction of where man comes from, and how he has changed over the ages. Although it does not focus on the passing of individual generations as does the succession myth, it creates a clear picture of how change has occurred over a long period of time. The myth is situated in the text following the story of Prometheus and Pandora. Addressing his audience (most immediately, his brother Perses), Hesiod begins the next section of his poem: "If you like, I will tell a different story … about how gods and men had the same origins" (εἰ δ᾽ ἐθέλεις, ἕτερόν τοι ἐγὼ λόγον ἐκκορυφώσω … ὡς ὁμόθεν γεγάασι θεοὶ θνητοί τ᾽ ἄνθρωποι 106, 108). This introduction clearly shows that the poet has no qualms about presenting two different accounts side by side; although this is a ἕτερον λόγον, we are not encouraged to set up the two stories in conflict with one another. If the two myths, of Prometheus/Pandora and of the five races, are taken at face value, then they are indeed "incompatible", as West insists;[37] but it seems more reasonable to assume that the poet thinks they can be complementary.[38] The myth of the five races takes a macrocosmic view of human history and condenses it into one short passage in order to demonstrate how we are different from previous ages, and as such it has very little in common with the Prometheus myth, which focuses on a single individual and his own relationship with the gods. However, as Clay shows, this difference in perspective does not mean that one should

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[34] Clay (2003) argues throughout that this difference in perspective is the abiding distinction between the two poems.

[35] γένος can be understood to mean either "race" or "age". West (1966) 158 defines it as a collective term, like "order" or "brood". Rosenmeyer (1957) 265-6 explains why, even with a decidedly historical perspective on the myth, it is better to call them "races" rather than "ages". Verdenius (1985) 80 is clear in translating as "race" – "in the sense of collection of similar beings". I translate "race" in preference to "age", as it more clearly suggests the fundamental differences between the different men, which extend further than simply their place in time.

[36] Most (1998) 127.

[37] West (1978) 172.

[38] Clay (2003)100-28 demonstrates how the two different Prometheus myths, in the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, are complementary to each other. Haubold (2010) 25-30 sees in the Hesiodic corpus as a whole a development "from divine to human knowledge, and from myth to reason" – the story of Pandora and the myth of the races are both parts of that development, with the latter focusing specifically on justice.

be privileged over the other.[39] The myth of the races is the more relevant for the present study, as it is clearly concerned with patterns of change through time. The following analysis will consider how far it shares these patterns with the theogonic myth of succession.

The myth has a clear structure, with each of the five races named and described in numbered sequence.[40] The first is the race of gold (109-26), which lives in the reign of Kronos. They have lives like the gods, with no hardship, toil, or old age. They die as peacefully as if they are going to sleep, and after death they become benevolent guardian spirits on the earth. The second race, of silver, is inferior to the golden in body and mind (127-42). They are characterised as childish, neglecting to worship the gods and dying soon after reaching adulthood due to their own thoughtlessness. After death these become blessed spirits of some kind, but still secondary to the golden race. The third race is not like the previous ones in any way (143-55). This is the bronze race of men, who are inherently violent, and are exterminated by their own hands as the result of constant fighting. This is the first race to have the human fate of descending to Hades after death, and they have no blessed afterlife. The poet surprises us with the fourth race, which is not named after a metal (156-173e), but is the race of heroes; this race is better and more just, but is wiped out by the wars at Thebes and Troy. After death this race has two fates: they are either transported to the Isles of the Blessed, or they die as mortals.[41] The fifth race is our own, the race of iron (174-201), characterised by hardship and toil, but with goodness mixed in with these evils. Looking ahead, the poet anticipates a time when justice and goodness will disappear, and Zeus will destroy this race too.

How are we to understand this myth, and reconcile it with the account of the divine succession myth? Thus summarised, it seems to have a coherent structure, and as such can be lifted out of its context and analysed as a discrete unit of text. Perhaps because of this detachability, the myth has been the subject of more than one form of structuralist analysis. While such readings often come to neat conclusions about the shape of the myth, they often do not give a satisfactory account of the myth's meaning and relation to history. The most prominent example of this is the interpretation of Vernant, who argues that the myth should not be read as a chronological sequence, but as a cyclical depiction of a timeless hierarchy of

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[39] Clay (2003) 81-128.

[40] They are called πρώτιστα (109), δεύτερον (127), τρίτον (143), τέταρτον (157), and πέμπτοισιν (174). Most (1998) addresses the difficulty of this demarcation, and summarises later attempts to simplify the Hesiodic scheme; the arguments which follow in this chapter attempt to demonstrate the importance of the five separate races.

[41] The significance of these two fates is discussed below.

values, structured by the opposing pair of δίκη and ὕβρις.[42] However, his focus on the two opposing values fails to find substantial support in the text. For example, the principle of δίκη is not mentioned in connection with the gold race until after their death, when their spirits watch over judgements on earth (124-5).[43] His description of the silver race as "bad kings" seems to ignore their most memorable feature of being like giant babies, mindless and impious; the text does not encourage us to see them in any kind of kingship role.[44]

Another way of interpreting the five races takes a psychological perspective, and argues that each race is representative of a different stage in a man's life; thus, the myth as a whole acts as "a symbolic expression of personal growth".[45] Such a psychological reading of the myth ignores that its purpose is ultimately didactic, as is the whole of the *Works and Days*.[46] It also, in common with a structuralist reading, bypasses the most obvious way of understanding the myth – as a linear and historical depiction of past time. In the nineteenth century, the myth was cited as the earliest example of Greek history,[47] but this reading was later seen as naïve.[48] In the mid-twentieth century, Rosenmeyer argued that we should see in the myth an illustration of Hesiod's historical mindset – the myth does not make sense as a parable or as a "compound situation", so it must be thought of as an account of past history.[49] Although it is one of only two passages in this poem which looks back to a previous time (the other being the preceding story of Prometheus and Pandora), it would not be inappropriate to the purposes of the poem as a whole if this section were meant to be read as history. If a

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[42] Vernant (1983). Verdenius (1985) 105-6 counters this as "there is no trace of a cyclic view of world history" in Hesiod. West (1978) 197 agrees – "the system as [the poet] expounds it is finite and complete". Clay (2009) 81 similarly rejects a cyclic interpretation, as it would undermine the moral purpose of the myth to encourage Perses to change his ways. Querbach (1985) also makes a structural analysis of the myth, dividing the races along a vertical, a horizontal, and a diagonal axis.

[43] Clay (2003) 82 points out that *dike* is not part of the life of the gold race; before Clay the point had been made by Crubellier (1996) 451, Redfield (1993) 47 and Carrière (1986) 204. Walcot's interpretation (1966) 82-5 has a similar failing; the ring-composition that he finds in the text necessitates a division which is not present in the text, this time separating the iron race from the previous four races. The poet's ostensible purpose in telling us of the previous races must be to illuminate our own race, so we should look at them all side-by-side.

[44] Brown (1998) 393-5 refutes this part of Vernant's argument along similar lines. Smith (1980) accuses Vernant's interpretation of imposing meaning onto the text rather than deriving meaning from it. Clay (2003) 82 thinks the reading of Vernant "consciously underplays the importance of the narrative sequence, or, rather, the narrative logic in the ordering of the contiguous races".

[45] Smith (1980) 145; Falkner (1989) also pointed out how the different races reflect the different ages of a man's life. This is also part of Vernant's argument, although it seems to clash somewhat with his cyclical interpretation of time – see Vernant (1983) 20-1. A similarly synchronic reading of the races has been presented by Fontenrose (1974).

[46] The didactic significance of the myth will become clear below. See Toohey (1996) 20-34 on the didactic nature of the poem, with bibliography.

[47] Gatz (1967) 1-2 describes this trend.

[48] Smith (1980) 47-9 calls the historical approach "naïve".

[49] Rosenmeyer (1957) 265.

historical perspective can be seen to contribute to the didactic purposes of the myth, this would seem to be the most effective way of reading it.

However we are to interpret the overall structure of the myth, one race stands out even to a superficial reader, by virtue of its name. The race of heroes is immediately differentiated from the other races because it is the only one not named after a metal. Because of this, some interpretations have seen the heroic race as an intrusion in the myth, a Greek addition to a structure which has its origins in Near-Eastern myths.[50] There do seem to be significant parallels with the metallic races in stories from non-Greek cultures, but this point alone does not reveal very much about the myth as Hesiod presents it. To some interpreters, the heroic race poses a problem; if the metallic races symbolise a decline from gold to iron, the heroes disrupt this linear deterioration. The heroes' anomalous presence in the myth might then be easily explained by their prominence in Homeric epic, which meant that archaic audiences would have questions about where they fitted. Thus, Smith sees the heroic race as an intruder: "forced to accept them as an alien body, [the myth] accepts them by ignoring their accomplishments and by making them an echo and a pendant to the Bronze race they follow".[51] The idea that the poet had no choice but to include the heroes is found in other interpretations, too: Fontenrose thinks the poet was "forced" into including the heroic race; West believes that the heroes "had to be accommodated in any survey of man's past"; Walcot thinks the heroes were introduced into the scheme because they were too important to omit.[52] However, this explanation may underestimate the complexity of how the poem interacts with the wider tradition. It does not make sense to say that Hesiod had no choice but to include the heroes in this myth, when he himself gives differing accounts of human history between his own poems. If he did not feel pressured to make this myth match up exactly with the story of Prometheus and Pandora, why should he suddenly be anxious to align himself with external material? If the poet had felt under pressure to include the famous generations who fought at Thebes and Troy, he could have named them as part of the bronze race.[53]

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[50] West (1978) 174-7 lists parallels for the metallic races from Indian, Babylonian and Biblical literature, stressing the complete lack of parallels for the race of heroes. See Walcot (1966) for a comprehensive study of Near-Eastern influence in the Hesiodic poems.

[51] Smith (1980) 154.

[52] Fontenrose (1974) 9; West (1978) 174; Walcot (1966) 86.

[53] Most (1998) 108.

Instead, the heroes are clearly differentiated from the bronze race. They are called "more just and better" (δικαιότερον καὶ ἄρειον 158),[54] and they are characterised by their involvement in organised warfare (πόλεμος 161), rather than the undiscriminating violence (ὕβρις 146) of the bronze race. The heroes are also unique in the myth for having a dual fate after death, which reflects their status as demi-gods (ἡμίθεοι 160). Rather than skimming over the heroes as Smith thinks he does, the poet distinguishes them from the other races and marks them out as superior to those who came before and after. This is not suggestive of a poet who felt forced into including extraneous material into his work.[55] Nelson likewise rejects the idea of the poet's hand being forced, and suggests that the heroes were included in the myth in order to bridge the gap between the previous ages and our own times.[56] Nelson is right that Hesiod's characterisation of the heroes makes them more like our own race, not only in their ability to be just, and in formal structures like organised warfare, but also by naming the cities where they fought; the heroes seem to have existed in our own world much more than any of the previous races did.[57] Brown articulates well the curious position of the heroic race: they "seem to interrupt the steady downward trend – yet they are the one race that automatically fits into the view of the past offered by the majority of Greek mythical tradition".[58] The heroes make it clear that even if we understand the races to follow one another in a linear timescale, any decline over that timescale is not linear.[59]

How then should we understand the pattern of change that occurs through the races? Brown sees the heroes as a positive anomaly, claiming that they "have shown that decline is

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[54] It is not made clear in the text whether these comparatives refer only the previous race of bronze, or whether the heroes are to be understood as better also than the succeeding race of Iron. Both possibilities would be consistent with the sense of the myth.

[55] Tsagalis (2009) 146-7 argues that Hesiod includes the heroic race due to his admiration of heroic epic – so when he wishes to have lived in an earlier time, he is wishing that he could have sung about the heroes rather than his current subject-matter. However, such envy for a different poetic tradition is not suggested elsewhere in the poem, and in general the Hesiodic tradition seems proudly to assert its difference in style from the Homeric poems – most clearly illustrated by the tradition of the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*.

[56] Nelson (1998) 73.

[57] Nelson (1998) 72-3.

[58] Brown (1998) 386-7 - the foreign origins of the metallic races make it "an irresistible challenge" for Hesiod to reconcile this myth with the Greek idea of the heroes. This interpretation is not as simplistic as those cited above who thought the poet had no choice – rather, he sees it as a conscious decision of the poet to reconcile the foreign with the Greek idea of the past and form something which is still distinctly Greek. Fontenrose (1974) 9 believes that the heroic and the bronze race are essentially the same, as they are both representations of the archaeological bronze age on 1400-1000BC, but that Hesiod "did not realise this". This is similar to Smith's opinion of the heroes as "an echo and a pendant" to the bronze race (1980) 154, but both fail to notice the crucial differences between the two races: the bronze race are characterised by unbridled violence and "works of Ares" (147), but only the activity of the heroes is called πόλεμος, organised warfare (160). Brown (1998) 396 suggests that the audience is anyway too familiar with individual heroes for them to be "lumped together as an impersonal metallic grouping".

[59] Most (1998) 109 considers this much to be clear from the text - "to suggest that what Hesiod was really trying to provide was a myth of linear decline would mean to consider him implausibly incompetent as a poet".

not always irreversible".[60]   However, this is to simplify the process of change; while the heroes continue one pattern of decline, they show improvement in other ways.   Clay's presentation of the five races argues that each race has a fatal flaw, which is corrected by the creation of the following race.[61]   In this view, the main purpose of humankind is that they honour the gods. Clay's analysis is thorough and convincing, but it does not fully explicate the different processes of change across the races. From the above discussion, we can discern that there seem to be three major types of change overall: a changing relationship with and likeness to the gods; a changing social organisation; and perhaps also a changing physicality. If we consider the significance of these three types of change, we will be able to ascertain whether this myth makes use of similar patterns of development as we saw in the myth of divine succession.

The first of the three types of change is the most obvious to see in the successive races: distance from the gods. In his introduction to the myth the poet says that this will be a story about "how the gods and men came from the same origin" (ὡς ὁμόθεν γεγάασι θεοὶ θνητοί τ᾽ ἄνθρωποι 108). This may be suggestive of a more theogonic type of story, of the birth of gods and men, or about men being born from gods. However, in the context of the story that follows, we should understand the "common origin" to refer to the way of life of the earliest men – the golden race lived "like the gods" (ὥστε θεοί 112) in that they were free from care, did not have to work, and never grew old. At the farthest end of the scale from this is the iron race, whose lives are characterised by hardship, toil, and old age, and are in this way completely unlike the gods.[62] At the two poles, then, this kind of deterioration is clear; men are becoming more and more separate and detached from the gods.   The intervening races are less clearly defined in this way, but they do still demonstrate a steady decline. The silver race, although "much worse" than the gold (πολὺ χειρότερον 127), still have an easy existence in their extended, carefree childhood, and are evidently still privileged by the gods after death in their existence as blessed spirits. Their downfall is that they failed to honour the gods (137-9). Giving the gods their due honours and sacrifices is an active acknowledgement of the distance and difference between gods and men – the silver men do not recognise their mortal separation from the gods, perhaps because of their carefree lives.[63] The third race, the bronze, do not have the carefree existence of the previous two, but they

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[60] Brown (1998) 396.
[61] Clay (2003) 85-94.
[62] Verdenius (1985) 108.
[63] Clay (2003) 88 stresses the importance of the distance between gods and men, and suggests that perhaps "the gods' purpose in making human beings aimed at creating a human awareness of that distance".

still share a significant similarity with the gods – they do not eat bread (οὐδέ τι σῖτον / ἤσθιον 146-7). This is suggestive not only of their inhuman diet, but it also tells us that they do not make use of agriculture, an important part of the iron race's existence.[64] It is a marker of difference between gods and men that the former do not eat grain, so this detail of the bronze men's diet makes them seem in one way similar to the gods.[65] Their fate after death, however, makes it clear that they are further removed from the gods than the two previous races – they have no immortal existence, but all go down to Hades (152-5).

The fourth race, the heroes, have a more complex relationship with the gods. They are called "the godlike race of hero men … demi-gods" (ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων θεῖον γένος … ἡμίθεοι 159-60), but in many ways they are like our own race – they are the first race to have named cities, navigate the seas in ships, and the mention of Oedipus' sheep (163) suggests that they have domesticated livestock.[66] So while they are in some way like the gods, they live distinctly mortal lives. Their fate after death is twofold; although they die, some of them at least are given a carefree existence on the Isles of the Blessed (μακάρων νήσοισι 171), an existence which seems to be much like that that the gold race enjoyed.[67] Does this constitute a decline from the previous three ages? It is not made clear that we should infer this, because the heroes are praised as being better than their predecessors (158), but this is the most recognisably human existence of all the races before our own, and that would mean that it is the furthest from the gods. The reason the heroes are called "godlike" and are blessed in the afterlife is that, although they are semi-divine, they live like mortal men and therefore recognise their difference from the gods. Zeus' love for this race implies that they honour the gods, making them superior to the bronze men. The first type of change, distance from the gods, does seem to show a pattern of linear decline through the ages; the heroes have a more complex place in this trajectory than the others, but they do not disrupt that decline. Rather, their recognition of their status and honouring of the gods means that they are less similar to the gods, but more favoured by them, while still living recognisably human lives.

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[64] Haubold (2010) 18 points out the importance of farming as a characteristic of being human and mortal. The eating of grain is, in the Homeric world, a vital marker of difference between men and gods – see chapter 2 of this thesis.

[65] Clay (1981) 113-6 explores how the gods' diet is linked to their immortality and their "bloodless blood".

[66] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 111-2 demonstrate how the gradual emergence of the polis can be detected in the poetry of Hesiod; living in cities is one way in which men differ from the gods, who live in "Olympian houses" (Ὀλύμπια δώματα)

[67] Most (1998) 117-8 interprets these two fates as a moral choice – those who died in war were punished for fighting over trivial matters. The textual support for this is not strong as I see it, but it is consistent with the emphasis on justice which links the heroic race with the iron, and is therefore in keeping with the didactic purpose of the myth.

The heroic race is a clear indicator of the second major type of change that is visible through the races: social organisation. Rather than showing decline over time, this type of change follows a trajectory of progress. The gold race does not show any sign of possessing social structures: they do not have to work, as the crops grow of their own accord and are shared out equally (116-9), which suggests there is no hierarchy of individuals. As none of them suffer old age, they have no need for social or familial structures to care for the weak; they have no way to settle disputes as there never are any, their lives being full of enjoyment and free from evil (115). Their similarity to the gods necessarily means they have no need for society as we know it. The silver race is slightly different in this respect. Their extended childhood being cared for by their mothers is suggestive of a family structure, but it is obviously not an effective structure because of their utter mindlessness (ἀφραδίης 134) and lack of respect for the gods that leads to their destruction. The role of the mother in the silver race may remind us of the disruptive role played by mothers in the divine succession myth; perhaps their extended childhood and mollycoddling in fact contributes to the mindless violence and disorder (134) which is their characteristic behaviour. Their lack of society is suggested by the description of the silver individual as "a big baby" or "a great fool" (μέγα νήπιος 131). The bronze race is not foolish in the same way as the silver, but they similarly lack any method of resolving disputes, and although they are described as loving "the painful works of Ares" (Ἄρηος / ἔργ᾽ ἔμελε στονόεντα 145-6), this is not in the context of organised warfare between cities, but unbridled mutual violence which eventually leads to their mass destruction (152-3). They do, however, build their houses and craft their weapons – both of bronze (150) – which is an initial sign of civilisation. Their lack of iron (151), which needs more work in order to be useful for tools and weapons, is suggestive of their primitivism. The heroic race, as we have already seen, is the first race to make use of societal civilisation as we would recognise it – in cities, ships, agriculture, and planned warfare with political motivation.

It seems fairly clear, then, that the five races in the Hesiodic myth suffer an increasing distance from the gods, but that this is balanced by an increase in social structures and human civilisation. The final type of change is more subtle, but it complements these two processes: the races' physical strength. In the case of the first two races, their physicality is not part of their characterisation; the only reference to their bodies is that the gold race do not age, and

that the silver race take a hundred years to reach maturity (132).[68] The lack of physical description of these races may be connected to their status after death, as spirits on or under the earth; their corporeal mortal lives are overshadowed by their eternal non-corporeal existence. It also seems to be a feature of their similarity to the gods, who are rarely described in physical terms but whose immense size and strength is assumed as a marker of difference from ourselves. The bronze race, however, is defined largely by their bodily appearance – "great strength and unconquerable hands grew from their shoulders on their strong limbs" (μεγάλη δὲ βίη καὶ χεῖρες ἄαπτοι / ἐξ ὤμων ἐπέφυκον ἐπὶ στιβαροῖσι μέλεσσιν 148-9). This is the race which is most literally associated with the metal it is named after, as the strength and power of bronze is reflected in their physicality. The emphasis on the size and strength of this race may lead us to think that they are bigger and stronger than the previous two races, but this is not supported by the text. Rather, the strength of the bronze men is characteristic of the race because of the way they use that strength against each other; physical violence is their defining feature. Once more it seems that the race of heroes marks a balance between the different types of change – their physicality is not mentioned by the poet perhaps because he expects his audience to be familiar with Homeric heroes, and it is therefore assumed that they are superior to us in size and strength. They may therefore be weaker than the bronze race, but they are beloved of the gods because they give due honours, and they are more like our own race in the way they live. The diminished bodily strength of the iron race is exemplified by Hesiod's prophecy that we will one day be defined by our old age, a state of physical decay which is not mentioned in relation to any of the previous races. The pattern of physical change is not as prominent in the text as the previous two types of change, but it does show a steady downward trend from the first two races, which seem to suffer none of the limitations of corporeal existence, to the wretched decay of old age suffered by the iron race.

This examination of how change occurs through the myth of the races reveals two patterns which follow intersecting trajectories: proximity to the gods decreases at the same rate as social organisation increases. The pattern of physical change which can be detected is less significant, and can be seen as an aspect of the races' decreasing likeness to the gods. There seem to be two important implications of this. First, social organisation can be seen as an antidote, or compensation, for our increasing distance from the gods. Second, the heroes

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[68] This latter point might suggest that the men of the second race are colossal in size, and the extended childhood is necessary to grow so large – but such a conception is not suggested by the text, which stresses the childish mindlessness of the silver race over any physical attributes.

occupy a central position in these different trajectories of change; they represent an interesting balance between a godlike and a human existence.[69] A key part of human society is therefore shown to be justice (δίκη), which is one of the defining characteristics of the heroes (δικαιότερον καὶ ἄρειον 158).   Justice is not an important part of life for the first three races because they have no human society.[70]   The heroes make up for their relatively diminished physical power, and their increased distance from the gods, by living according to justice. If, as the myth suggests, the only way to balance out our distance from the gods is to create a just society, the story has a strong didactic message. We cannot do anything to change our mortality or our human, bodily existence, but we do have the choice to live justly. This is the crux of Hesiod's myth of the races: it shows us the necessity of moral responsibility, and suggests that we are capable of correcting the further downward decline that he prophesies. This possibility is emphasised by the poet in his description of the transition between the two final races, which suggests an important link between them.[71]

In introducing each of the first four races, the text makes it clear that they were made anew by the gods, or specifically by Zeus, by using forms of ποιέω, "made".[72] These races therefore have no genealogical relation to one another, as each dies out completely before the next one is begun through the intervention of the gods. The fifth race, however, is different. There is a difficulty at this point in the text, as lines 173a-e are usually called a later interpolation.[73]   These lines contain an introduction to the race of iron, saying it was "established" by Zeus (θῆκεν, from τίθημι, 173d), not "made", as all the previous races were. Even if we omit the disputed lines, there is nothing to suggest that the fifth race was created anew as all the previous ones were, so however we read the text it seems to suggest a gradual transition from the fourth race to the fifth, rather than the complete separation of successive races. Furthermore, Most argues that the description of the heroes as the προτέρη γενεή should be understood to mean "the previous generation", and not "the previous race", for which the poet could have used γένος as he does elsewhere. This would strongly suggest that the two races should be seen as earlier and later forms of the same race. This would mean

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[69] Although Hesiod's myth presents the heroes as exhibiting a balance between the three types of change, they also posed a risk of threatening Olympian stability, as Clay (2003) 95 points out. This is illustrated not by the Hesiodic myth but by Homeric characters who struggle with their semi-divine status, especially Achilles. Most (1998) 127 argues that the heroes are the central race of the scheme, "upon whom all depends".

[70] The gold race are guardians of justice only after their deaths; the term is not used of them while living.

[71] Continuity between the heroic race and the iron race is supported by Fontenrose (1974) 2; Leclerc (1993) 219; Most (1998) 113. The reference to the heroes as the "previous race" (160) to us may act as reminder of our relative proximity to them.

[72] Forms of ποιέω occur at 110, 128, 144 and 158.

[73] Most (2006) 101; West (1978) 195.

that the heroes of Homeric epic are our ancestors.[74] While each of the first three races can be seen as part of the distant mythical past, the race of heroes is presented in a more historical way, as we can trace our own society back to theirs. This genealogical connection is only possible if we understand the myth as a linear depiction of past time. Although the first four races were not connected with one another, the final two are linked as past and present generations, despite the great differences between the heroes and ourselves. This is more similar to the succession myth of the *Theogony*, which makes use of the successive generations as a structuring principle.

This link between the heroes and ourselves gives us the potential to be δικαιότερον καὶ ἄρειον ("more just and better"158) in the same way as they were, and gives weight to Hesiod's argument that Perses should reconsider his behaviour. The alternative to living justly is described at the end of the myth, when Hesiod switches to the future tense and describes an awful deterioration in the behaviour and lives of men – they will fight with one another, never ceasing from toil and distress, dishonouring their parents and doing injustice to one another, and "Zeus will destroy this race of mortals, too" (Ζεὺς δ᾽ ὀλέσει καὶ τοῦτο γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων 180) when babies are born with grey hair.[75] This vision of the future is characterised by a breakdown in the social structures that we have seen developing over the course of the five races. The opportunity to make moral choices has been wasted by men who choose instead to behave unjustly to one another. One example of this social disintegration is that men will dishonour their parents, a prediction which is repeated three times at 182, 185 and 188. The first instance, (οὐδὲ πατὴρ παίδεσσιν ὁμοίιος οὐδέ τι παῖδες 182) may be suggestive of more than just dishonour. Verdenius reads ὁμοίιος to mean the same as ὁμοφρῶν, "being of the same mind", and therefore understands this to refer to disagreement and social breakdown between father and sons.[76] However, it is also possible that this line refers to a more profound dissimilarity between the two generations – that the sons are fundamentally unlike their fathers. This idea may be suggestive of the sexual infidelity of women which would lead to dissimilarity between fathers and sons, but even if we do not make this inference, this must mean that the sons are worse than their fathers.

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[74] Most (1998) 112-3. Grethlein (2012) 18-9 argues that the Homeric notion of the past does not see previous ages of men as qualitatively different, only quantitatively.

[75] Verdenius (1985) 108 suggests that the babies born with grey hair (line 181) are representative of the moral rigidity and inflexibility of old age; people will no longer be capable of adapting to one another. It is more obviously a sign of physical fragility, and completes the process of physical deterioration that we have noticed in the course of the five races.

[76] Verdenius (1985) 109.

Moral deterioration is envisaged as nothing less than a complete break between generations.[77] The poet's vision of the future is coloured by fear of what will transpire if men do not make the right moral choices, and it therefore makes sense that more is at stake than just fathers arguing with sons. His fear is that men's injustice will lead to a disastrous deterioration in the state of humanity, to such an extent that Zeus will decide to destroy our race as he destroyed the previous four. The reading which has the strongest cohesion with the rest of the passage, and the myth as a whole, is that social structures and justice are breaking down, and our moral deterioration is reflected in further physical decline. This is why it is imperative for Perses, the kings, and all of us, to make the right moral choices.

The apocalyptic vision of the future continues in a subsequent passage, when the poet addresses Perses and the kings directly, and describes the different fates of a just city and an unjust one (213-73). This passage falls outside the normal delineation of the myth of the races, because it is separated from it by the short fable of the hawk and the nightingale (202-12), itself fundamentally about justice, but the picture it presents is a continuation of the prediction for the iron race.[78] The description of the just city is also linked to the five races by the mention of Zeus' guardian spirits who watch over judgements (252-5), which refers to the post-mortem existence of the gold race. Some interpreters therefore make use of this passage to understand Hesiod's predictions for the iron race. Koenen argues that the just city displays "a reversal of the downward descent of the fifth age" which demonstrates that life can improve for our race if we live correctly.[79] The two descriptions are placed side by side, of the just city, without war or famine and with abundant wealth from the land, and of the unjust city, where a whole community suffers from the evil of one man, and Zeus punishes them all. This encourages a direct comparison and suggests that the poet is offering a choice to his audience, informing Perses and the kings of the consequences of their actions. At the close of his description of the unjust city, Hesiod makes an optimistic prediction for the future – "But I do not think that Zeus the counsellor will let these things happen" (ἀλλὰ τά γ᾽ οὔ πω ἔολπα τελεῖν Δία μητιόεντα 273). Despite the gloomy prophesies that he has given, the poet is hopeful for the future and believes that his audience will take his advice.

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[77] Neitzel (1975) 79-82 reads this line as a description of general inferiority.

[78] Beall (2005) argues that the entire middle portion of the poem (lines 109-380) is a coherent essay on the theme of justice. Nelson (1997) sees the fable as a link between the injustice of the iron age (lines 180-201) and Zeus' punishment of such injustice (lines 213-83). *Dikê* is not so much a force of pure goodness, but "a condition of human life, determined by the will of Zeus" (247). Lonsdale (1989) suggests that the passage should be characterised not only as a fable, but also as an omen.

[79] Koenen (1994) 10-11. Brown makes the same point (1998) 390.

We can therefore see that the myth of the five races demonstrates three types of change over time: a decrease in physical strength and proximity to the gods, balanced by an increase in social structures and the essential capacity for justice. Although this myth has a different narrative purpose from the myth of divine succession in the *Theogony*, we can therefore see that it shares a similar pattern of change over time. Although the gods do not suffer a decrease in physical strength like mankind does, the myth of succession does show that social structures and ideas of justice become more important as generations pass, and the distribution of honours replaces physical violence in the struggle for supremacy. Although the histories of the gods and of mankind develop on different planes, they follow the same principles of decreasing physical violence and increasing social structures; the myth of the five races adds to this the gradual distancing of men from gods. It therefore begins to seem possible that these patterns are traditional, in the sense that they can surface in different poems with variant narrative concerns, and remain recognisably the same.[80]

So far we have seen how the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* make use of different narrative perspectives, but seem to share some key patterns of how change occurs over the history of gods and men. The viewpoint of the heroes, who we have seen in the myth of the five races to take up a pivotal position in these patterns of change, has so far not been the main focus of these accounts, which are chiefly concerned either with the Olympian gods or with the current age of men. This missing viewpoint is taken up by the fragmentary *Catalogue of Women*. The *Catalogue* has suffered much more uncertainty about its dating, authorship and genre than the previous two poems, and scholarship is still far from reaching a consensus on these points.[81] Although such textual questions are not the concern of this thesis, they are relevant in so far as they may rule out the kind of intertextual relations and traditional patterns which are under analysis here. However, textual discussions and attempts to date the poem are necessarily confined to the final, written, form of the poem, from which our fragments are derived. This does not prevent us from considering the possibility that the

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[80] I use "tradition" here in the sense that it is like a language, following Foley (1999); see Introduction to this thesis.

[81] Ormand (2014) 1-15, with bibliography, presents the most important scholarship on the conditions of the poem's production, emphasising our uncertainty on these issues, and the general consensus for a date sometime in the sixth century. See Hirschberger (2004) 42-51 for a comprehensive survey and summary of the various arguments on dating and authorship. Janko (1982) 86-7 suggests that the *Catalogue* should be dated slightly earlier than the 680 date he gives for the *Theogony*. West (1985) argues for a date late in the sixth century; his arguments are refuted by Dräger (1997). See also Ormand (2014) 42-6 on the alternative title *Ehoiai*, descriptions of the poem by ancient authors, and the implications of both for how we consider the genre of the poem; Rutherford (2000) on the issue of the *Catalogue*'s genre and its relationship with the Nekuia of the *Odyssey*.

stories, ideas, and characters of the *Catalogue* come from the same broad tradition as the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, predating any fixed written version.[82] Furthermore, there is no evidence that questions of authenticity troubled scholars in antiquity: Apollonius, Aristarchus, and Crates all cite the *Catalogue* as the work of Hesiod with as much certainty as the two major poems.[83] This is because they recognise that it belongs to the same type of poetry as other Hesiodic poems, and is part of the same genre. The content of the *Catalogue* is recognisably Hesiodic in that it makes sense alongside the two dominant poems of the Hesiodic tradition, which is different from making the assertion that it is the work of the same single poet.[84] We are therefore able to consider that the *Catalogue* may be involved in the same process of traditional referentiality and intertextuality as operates between the Hesiodic and the Homeric poems.[85] This is the interpretation favoured by Ormand, and I follow his approach by including the *Catalogue* within the remit of this thesis.[86] As my study is looking not for specific instances of direct allusion between poems, but evidence of shared patterns and ideas of genealogical history, it is not hampered by problems of the dating or authorship of the poem. It is possible, at least, that the fragments of the *Catalogue* may contain some of the same traditional ideas which we identify in the other poems, and may help us to understand how far the hexameter tradition contains fundamentally similar patterns of change which permeate its various manifestations. When looking for evidence of the *Catalogue*'s conception of history, and patterns of change, there are two distinct sections which seem most useful: fragments from the opening and the closing of the poem.[87] I focus on these two sections in order to gain an impression of how the poem places itself in epic history, and examine whether its account of the heroes is in keeping with the patterns of change which we have seen to be present in the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*.

The proem to the *Catalogue* (F1 M-W), of which about twenty lines survive largely intact, sets out a specific timeframe for what follows. The repetition of τότε ("then, at that time") in lines 3 and 6 indicates that the poet has in mind a particular moment in the past, and creates a contrast with the initial νῦν which begins the proem ("Now, sing..." F1.1). The

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[82] See the Introduction to this thesis for more explanation of this approach.

[83] Apollonius in his argument to the Shield (F230 M-W); Aristarchus in a scholion to *Iliad* 23.683; Crates in a scholion to *Theogony* 142.

[84] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 15-40.

[85] Ormand (2014) 11-4.

[86] Ormand (2014); combined with this literary interpretation is his aim to situate the poem in the particular socio-political context of the sixth century, which is not shared by this thesis.

[87] I use the numbering of the fragments from Merkelbach and West (1967). The structure of the poem is explained by West (1985) 31-124; the ordering of the fragments is supported by Osborne, in Hunter (2005) 5-8.

specific timeframe of the poem is then defined by the actions and interactions of gods and mortals which took place at that time – when the women "who were then the best" (αἳ τότ᾽ ἄρισται ἔσαν 3), mingled with the gods (μισγόμεναι θεοῖσ[ιν] 5). The narrative timeframe of the poem is therefore delineated according to the relationship between gods and mortals that prevailed then, a concern which is shared with the other Hesiodic poems. The lines that follow are more fragmentary, but elaborate upon the narrative timeframe by describing the similarities and differences between immortals and mortals in this period: although they share feasts (ξυναὶ γὰρ τότε δα[ῖτες ἔσαν] 6), they are divided by the latter suffering inevitable death, a difference which is implicit in the opposing ἀθανάτοις and καταθντοῖς in line 7. In this, we find a picture of gods and men which is fundamentally the same as that presented in the passages studied so far in this chapter. At all points in the timescale of cosmic history, the defining difference between gods and men is that all men are mortal, even the very first race of gold in the *Works and Days*.

The significance of the "common feasts" of gods and men is more complicated, as it does not exactly match any of the Hesiodic five races. Though it may remind us of the gold race, there is a crucial difference. The race of gold is described as living "like the gods" (ὥστε θεοί *Works and Days* 112), in an existence totally free from care, whereas the men of the *Catalogue* share "common" (ξυναί F1.6) feasts with the gods. These are two different states, one of being inherently similar to the gods, and the other of sharing certain things with the gods despite crucial differences.[88] We therefore cannot identify the men of the *Catalogue* proem directly with the race of gold. It is the differences between gods and men which the proem most prominently stresses, although the relevant lines are the most fragmentary: gods and men do not have an equal lifespan, as some men grow old and die, and others die young (8-13), neither of which is a fate relevant to the immortals. The emphasis on feasting together may encourage us to see here an allusion to the feast at Mekone, which in the *Theogony* is the crucial moment of division between the two groups (*Theogony* 535-57).[89] However, there is no simple way to map the events of the *Theogony* onto the *Catalogue*, which nowhere suggests that Prometheus' deceitful actions were the reason for this commensality coming to an end. Instead, the Trojan War is the marker of division, as I discuss below. For this reason, Irwin argues that the *Catalogue* presents "an alternative

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[88] Clay (2003) 166-7 points out this distinction. Gonzalez (2010) 386 notes that the account of the gold race in *Works and Days* does not mention social intercourse between gods and men.

[89] West (1961) 133 sees the reference to feasting in line 6 as an indication that this is prior to events at Mekone. Irwin, in Hunter (2005) 55, counters this.

conception of past time" which cannot be reconciled with the other Hesiodic poems.[90] Irwin is right to emphasise that the different poems do not use the same points of reference, but that does not mean we need to write off the *Catalogue* as having an altogether separate chronology. So far, in this chapter, we have seen that the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* share important patterns and structures of change over time, despite the manifold differences in their accounts of cosmic history. It is now my purpose to examine whether the same broad patterns are discernible in the *Catalogue* proem as well.

The above discussion of accounts of cosmic history in the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* results in a fairly clear impression of the patterns of change which are shared between the two. Over time, gods and men become increasingly more distanced from one another, as men become more like ourselves in their conditions of life; this is balanced by increasing social structures and the importance of justice in human society. The heroes, in the myth of the races, occupy a pivotal position in that timeline of deterioration and progress, as they still have some links with the gods but live recognisably mortal lives. A similar idea of balance between the two processes of change can be found in the *Catalogue* proem, but is expressed in a new way. Immortals and mortals are fundamentally divided from one another by their nature, but they share the social practice of dining together, and they mix sexually. The moment described by the proem occupies a central position in mythical chronology in the same way as the heroes do in the myth of the races, but the two accounts cannot be perfectly aligned with one another because of the narrative differences between the poems. The sequential, macrocosmic view of the races myth is replaced by the very specific timeframe of the *Catalogue*. The heroes referred to in each poem are the same, because they each represent a balancing point between the two driving forces of change which shape cosmic history. The *Catalogue*, therefore, is situated in the same scheme of time as we can trace in the other Hesiodic poems, and hints at the same processes of change.

The significance of the *Catalogue*'s particular moment in time only becomes clear when we come to the final section of the poem, which describes the very end of the time of the heroes, and looks ahead to what will come after. Fragment 204 brings to a close the fifth book of the poem, which seems to have been entirely concerned with the marriage-contest for Helen.[91] For one event to have occupied such a large portion of the poem as a whole is

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[90] Irwin (2005) 55.

[91] West (1985) 31-124 explains and justifies this arrangement of the fragments. Osborne (2005) 21 called the final book "dominated by Helen".

strongly suggestive of its significance.[92] Many commentators have noticed that the catalogue of Helen's suitors shares similarities with Helen's catalogue of the Achaeans in the *Iliad*, although it is not necessary to claim, as West did, that the catalogue of suitors is "clearly influenced by the *Iliad*".[93] The effect of the similarity between the two passages is that the build-up to the marriage immediately reminds an audience of the war that is to come, and colours what would normally be a joyful event with the knowledge of imminent death and suffering.[94] I return to this passage in my chapter on Helen in part II of this thesis. For now, its importance lies in its situating of the poem as a whole in a very specific narrative moment, when a greater division is instigated between gods and men, and the process of distancing between the two is accelerated. The Trojan war is marked as an event of great significance, not through its direct narration, but through its cumulative foreshadowing in the catalogue of Helen's suitors.[95] In the myth of the races, the war is named along with the Theban campaign as the reason for the dying out of the heroes. The *Catalogue* seems to be using a similar idea, but pinpointing just one of those wars as the crucial moment. This is in keeping with its very specific timeframe, in contrast with the broader scope of the races myth.

As fragment 204 continues, not only the war seems to be foreshadowed, but a whole new epoch. After Helen's marriage to Menelaus and the birth of their daughter Hermione, the next section of the text suggests a radical change from the conditions of life described in the proem.[96] Some of the lines that follow are very fragmentary, but it is clear that a process of separation is underway between gods and men.[97] The "blessed (gods)" (μάκ[α]ρες)[98] are to live apart from human beings (102-3) and will no longer be able to mingle with them socially and sexually, therefore bringing an end to the procreation of heroes.[99] All of this is

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[92] On the catalogue of suitors, see Cingano in Hunter (2005).

[93] West (1985) 115 qualifies this "…or at any rate by a catalogue of *Iliad* type in epic poetry about Troy". The catalogue of ships also shares in the conspicuous absence of Achilles.

[94] More on this in my chapter on Helen in part two of this thesis. West (1985) 115 suggests that the catalogue of suitors "perhaps served as both a reminder of previous genealogies and as a measure of the size of the impending war". Osborne (2005) 22 sees the catalogue as insisting "that what is important about the preceding genealogies is not their order but their totality: all of them contribute to the panhellenes' gathering at Troy".

[95] Clay (2005) 29 suggests that the *Catalogue* as a whole "would continually point to the event that brings the heroic age to its conclusion".

[96] West (1961) suggests a reconstruction of the whole passage; the introduction of the harsh weather of winter is a key motivator for the abduction and the war, as men were for the first time forced to work for their living, and take to the seas.

[97] Gonzalez (2010) 411, 416-7 calls this separation "the ultimate purpose of Zeus", agreeing with Clay (2005) 28.

[98] Gonzalez (2010) 411-8 demonstrates the necessity that this refers to the gods, not to "blessed" demigods or heroes.

[99] It has been suggested by some interpretations that there is a tripartite distinction expressed here, of gods, demi-gods and ordinary men; the latter two groups existing together, and the ordinary men surviving while the heroes were extinguished – see Most (2008) 57. Gonzalez (2010) 384 calls this distinction "untenable …

described as part of a plan devised by Zeus "to destroy the lives of the demi-gods" (ὀλέσθαι / ψυχὰς ἡμιθέω[ν] 99-100).[100] As argued by Clay, the denomination of the heroes as "demi-gods" (ἡμίθεοι), in its selective uses across hexameter poetry, seems to be suggestive of a retrospective view of these men; they are called demi-gods by those who are not.[101] The use of this title emphasises that the heroes are located in an irretrievable past time, and reminds us that Zeus' plan was entirely successful. The specific narrative timeframe which was set out in the *Catalogue* proem therefore comes to an end in the closing section of the poem. The *Catalogue* encapsulates within itself a discrete period of time which is different from the time before and the time afterwards. The separation enacted by Zeus will restore relations between men and gods to "how things were before" (ὡς τὸ πάρος περ 102); the period of time narrated in the *Catalogue*, the time of the heroes, is presented as an aberration, not to be repeated. In this way the poem creates for itself a particular niche in the larger picture of cosmic history, which delineates it from the other poems of the hexameter corpus while fitting into the same overarching timeline.[102]

In the myth of the races, the end of the heroes is followed by a radical deterioration in the conditions of human life, culminating in the doom-laden prophecy of how the iron race will finally become so wretched and unjust that it will be destroyed in its turn.[103] In the final section of the *Catalogue*, a similar idea may be expressed, although the relevant lines are badly preserved and subject to varying lines of interpretation.[104] Lines 124-9 describe a violent wind which strips the fruit from the trees, makes everything tremble, and "consumes the strength of mortals" (τρύχεσκεν δὲ μένος βρότεον 128). West reads this as a description of the first autumn, ushering in the turning seasons which will make men's lives miserable.[105] Clay presents a more specific interpretation, in which this is the storm at Aulis, which portentously prevented the Greeks from setting sail for Troy.[106] Ormand warns against this

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nowhere do we find any support for the notion that a subset of fighters [at Troy] are heroes and the rest, mere mortals". It is important for the Hesiodic and the Homeric conception of change that the men of the current age are related to the race of heroes by blood – see Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 57: "as far as men are concerned, there is an unbroken connection, through genealogy, all the way back to the beginnings of cosmic history".

[100] See chapter 2 of this thesis on the significance of Zeus' plan in the Homeric and Cyclic poems.

[101] Clay (2005) 30. This is consistent with the use of the term in the myth of the races (*Works and Days* 159-60) and in a single Homeric instance (*Iliad* 12.23) which is discussed further in chapter 2 of this thesis.

[102] Ormand (2014) 208 – the *Catalogue* represents the heroes as a "strange intermediary step" in a way which is consistent with the accounts of the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*.

[103] See above in this chapter.

[104] Here I focus on the most complete lines of this final section: the remaining lines are much more fragmentary and relate the life-cycle of a snake, the relevance and significance of which is not easily discerned. For an interpretation of these difficult lines, see West (1985) 119-20, Clay (2005) 33-4, and Hirschberger (2004).

[105] West (1985) 119-20 also sees an allusion in 127 to the new necessity of sea-faring as a means of survival.

[106] Clay (2005) 32-3.

reading, which does not explain the "apparently cosmic nature of the storm here described", and he instead sees the storm as a clear indication of the change which is occurring between one age and the next.[107] The winds sent by Zeus, a sign of his sovereign power, have a direct effect upon men, making their conditions of life harder. Furthermore, the strength of men is diminished, which matches with the type of change described in the Hesiodic account of the iron race. The destructive winds serve as a sign of the break between mortals and immortals which is being enacted, a clear division between the period of time narrated by the *Catalogue*, and life afterwards, as it is now. Although this is expressed in different terms from the change between the heroes and the iron race in the *Works and Days*, both texts express the same essential idea: the time of the heroes is irrevocably past, and life now is much worse. The pattern of deterioration and separation from the gods is shared across the different accounts.

It is therefore possible to see that the heroes who are the subject of the *Catalogue* refer to the same group of men, living at the same time, as the heroes in the myth of the races. The *Catalogue* provides a different perspective, as it focuses on the short period of time when heroes were born and lived, and therefore emphasises the contrast with the present time. As well as filling the chronological gap between the end of the *Theogony* and the present time of the *Works and Days*, its narrative is complementary in that it elaborates further on the time of the heroes, only mentioned sequentially in the races myth. The context and content of the *Catalogue* is therefore strongly Hesiodic, and it seems to share the same patterns of deterioration over time as were present in the other accounts. It does not contain the same strong sense of social progress that was part of the myth of the races, but this does not mean it is inconsistent on this point. The poem's focus on the specific time of the heroes means that the succeeding period is cast in a contrastingly negative light. It is not the concern of the *Catalogue* to instruct the current age of men on how to live justly, and so it omits any clear suggestion of the importance of justice and social organisation. The narrow focus of this poem means that it cannot fully reflect the patterns of change over time which we saw in the other Hesiodic poems, but it does present a picture of a particular moment in time which is consistent with the larger structure. In this way, the *Catalogue* is a useful complement to the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, and seems to suggest that certain patterns of change are shared across the different poems even when they are not explicitly laid out.

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[107] Ormand (2014) 211-2.

Another work ascribed to Hesiod in antiquity, the *Shield*, survives in more complete form than the fragmentary *Catalogue*.[108] The *Shield* shares with the *Catalogue* its opening fifty lines, on the family of Alcmene, which appear in the latter poem at the beginning of book four. This makes it possible that the *Shield* was composed as an elaboration on the other poem, expanding one particular genealogical line into a fuller narrative.[109] The rest of the poem, however, is quite unlike any of the *Catalogue* fragments in form and content. The whole central section is concerned with the shield of the title, belonging to Heracles, as he carries it into battle against Cycnus, and the decoration which is described proliferates in themes of death, violence, and warfare. This graphic ekphrasis has led the poem as a whole to suffer the denigration of scholars, who see these gruesome depictions as evidence of an incompetent poet.[110] However, more recent scholarship evaluates the poem in the thematic context of the rest of the Hesiodic corpus, rather than pursuing questions of authorship and dating. Stamapoulou argues that the *Shield* consciously locates itself within the Hesiodic timeline of cosmic history, and that its depiction of Heracles is reflective of his specific generation of the heroes.[111] Stamapoulou's argument is convincing, and she does well to justify the inclusion of this poem in the Hesiodic corpus. She demonstrates how we should see the events of the *Shield* as being situated in a very specific moment in the narrative chronology of the other poems. However, the nature of the poem, with its detailed narrative and extended ekphrasis, means it does not seem to offer anything further to the present investigation of how patterns of change are presented in the Hesiodic poems. The wider timeline of the Hesiodic corpus may help us to understand the *Shield*, but the *Shield* does not help us to understand more about the patterns of cosmic history which are the object of this thesis. I therefore do not attempt to add to Stamapoulou's arguments here.

While the *Shield* does not prove useful for my study of how far the Hesiodic poems contain a common structure of genealogical history, we have seen in this chapter that the *Theogony*, *Works and Days*, and *Catalogue of Women* all contain some similar patterns of how the history of gods and men developed over time. The most important of these patterns,

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[108] Also known as the *Aspis* or the *Scutum*. See Cook (1937) with bibliography, on the dating of the poem. See Janko (1986) 38-44 for a summary of the textual problems and difficulties of dating. Problems of authorship are bound up with the similar problems faced by the *Catalogue*, due to the direct textual connection between the two poems.

[109] Janko (1986) 39 presents the most likely scenario to be that "the author of the *Shield* took lines 1-56 from the *Catalogue* to form the first part of the composition".

[110] Martin, in Hunter (2005), summarises the denigration suffered by the poem in modern scholarship, before trying to re-evaluate the poem in line with a positive "trash" aesthetic.

[111] Stamatopoulou (2013).

which is discernible in all three poems, is a gradual distancing between gods and men, which means that immortals and mortals are less similar, and have less close relationships, as time passes. As this distancing takes place, a concomitant process of social strengthening means that men gradually have lives more like our own. The further men are from the gods, the more they are like men of our own time, living recognisably human lives based around principles of social responsibility and justice. These two patterns of change, one on a downward trajectory and the other on an upward, can be imagined to bisect one another at the point of the heroes. In the *Works and Days* and the *Catalogue*, the heroes are described as existing in a state of balance between these two types of change. They have relationships with the gods, and are godlike in their physical strength, but they live within the same social structures as we do. In each of the Hesiodic poems, the history and development of gods and men is referred to for different purposes: to explain how the Olympian hierarchy came into being; to argue for the importance of justice and instruct us on how to make up for our miserable human existence; to mark out as unique and extraordinary the period of time when the heroes were alive. Despite these differences, the poems share certain patterns and structures of change over time, which link them all to a common tradition. These patterns will only have relevance to the characters of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* if it can be ascertained that the Homeric poems also share some of these ideas about genealogically-structured history. The following chapter examines the extent to which such a claim can be made, and how far the Homeric portion of the hexameter corpus corresponds to the Hesiodic in its conception of past time.

2: The Homeric Poems

In this chapter my focus turns to the Homeric poems, in order to assess the extent to which they reflect the patterns of change, progress and decline that are discernible in the Hesiodic poems. My aim is to come to an understanding of how much these different poems of the hexameter corpus seem to show awareness of similar ideas of traditional history, and how the lives of gods and men change and develop over time. The principal difference between the Homeric poems and the Hesiodic poems is that of narrative scope and perspective. The Homeric poems have a very narrow focus in that they relate stories and present characters in great detail, with the use of extended description, simile, metaphor and direct speech which is quite unlike any of the Hesiodic poems. Furthermore, they do not contain the kind of self-presented authorial persona that we encounter in the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, and which informs those poems' accounts of cosmic history. Instead, the events of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are largely focalised through internal characters, whether divine or human. The question of individual characters and their presentation will be the focus of the second part of this thesis: in this chapter I examine whether, despite this divergence in perspective from the Hesiodic poems, we may be able to say that the Homeric poems contain implicit suggestions of the patterns which are explicit in the Hesiodic poems. The first section of this chapter examines the *Homeric Hymns* and certain poems of the Epic Cycle in order to ascertain whether it may be useful to read the Homeric poems in the context of these other hexameter works. I then go on to focus solely on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and through a close reading of certain phrases and passages I investigate how far their ideas about genealogical history follow the same structures and patterns as we find in the Hesiodic poems. Finally, I address the question of whether this traditional narrative of history can really be seen to make a difference on the level of a single generation, by presenting a case-study of how the Homeric Diomedes is similar to and different from his father Tydeus.

Just as the Hesiodic *Theogony* and *Works and Days* should, I argue, be considered alongside the less canonical *Catalogue of Women*, and, to an extent, the *Shield*, in this chapter I adopt a broader remit than just the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. While these two works are what I principally refer to as the Homeric poems, there are other poems which should be considered as part of the same corpus of hexameter epic, and which have at some point in their history

been attributed to "Homer".[1] First, I consider the case of the *Homeric Hymns* which, while being much shorter in scope than the two canonical works, were ascribed to Homer in antiquity. I also address in this chapter the relevance of the poems of the Epic Cycle, some of which were similarly attributed to Homer at an early point in their reception. The discussions of this chapter include the *Hymns* and certain poems of the Cycle in order to present an analysis of the Homeric poems which is in keeping with how early audiences may have received them, and which helps us to discern where the various poems may be making use of similar patterns of cosmic history.

As I explain in my Introduction, the aim of this thesis is to consider the Homeric poems in the context of the early hexameter tradition, and as such my investigations and arguments often engage with issues of allusion and intertextuality. The way in which I approach the hexameter poems bears similarities with the work of Burgess, Slatkin, Pucci, and others,[2] who make use of a flexible model of interpretation in order to understand how the various poems may show awareness of and interact with one another. The most important aspect of this approach is that it is not concerned with specific points of intertextuality, or direct references between one poem and another, but rather with the coherence of different poems within the wider tradition – that they "make sense" alongside each other, or are recognisably part of the same broad poetic and mythological framework. In the case of this chapter, this means asking whether the patterns of genealogical history which are explicitly laid out in the Hesiodic poems may also be present in the Homeric poems.

I start with the section of the Homeric corpus which has already been shown to play an important role in the epic conception of the history of gods and men: the *Homeric Hymns*. The work of Clay, as well as showing that these works should be regarded as part of the same body of epic as the poems of Hesiod and Homer, shows how the narratives of the four longest hymns are linked by a common mythological framework to the history of the gods as it is told in Hesiod.[3] Her analysis shows how each hymn describes a particular significant episode in that history; the current divine order is in some way challenged or made problematic, and the narrative tells how the stable Olympian scheme, with Zeus at its head, is re-established and

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[1] See Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 21-34 on the designation "Homer" in antiquity, and the relationship of the Homeric corpus to the Hesiodic.
[2] See Introduction pages 8-11 for further discussion and bibliography.
[3] Clay (1989).

maintained.[4]   In this way, Clay's arguments about the *Hymns* are bound up with her interpretations of the Hesiodic poems, which are a prominent influence on the previous chapter of this thesis. In this chapter I do not attempt to add very much to Clay's convincing interpretation of these four hymns, which is supplemented by some thorough commentaries on them.[5] What is important for my study is that these longer *Hymns*, despite their probable differences in performance context and their much smaller narrative scope,[6] have been shown to contain similar patterns and structures of the history of gods and men as are found in the Hesiodic poems. This is the case despite their traditional designation as "Homeric" – the ancient scholars who gave them this designation saw them as part of the same poetic corpus as the Trojan war epics, probably because they too had a narrow narrative focus, and not the Hesiodic poems which are more obviously similar in subject matter, but not in tone or form.[7] This makes it at least possible that the traditional patterns identified in the previous chapter are not restricted to the Hesiodic poems, and we have reason to believe that we may also be able to detect them in the Homeric poems.

The hymn which seems to have most relevance to the aims of the current chapter is the longer *Hymn to Aphrodite* (fifth in the collection), so it is worth revisiting Clay's interpretation of it here as a representative example. This hymn is marked out from the other longer compositions as it neither tells of the birth of the god, nor does it have any obvious links to local cult. It is also unique in that it orientates itself by an event in human rather than divine history. As the sexual union of Aphrodite and Anchises prefigures the birth of Aeneas, we can place its events in the generation preceding the Trojan war.[8] As such, it is the hymn which has the most obvious links to the Homeric epics, in its allusions to Aeneas, but also the judgement of Paris which similarly took place on Mount Ida.[9] Furthermore, Clay argues that the union of the goddess with Anchises is part of the overarching plan of Zeus to bring an end to the age of heroes, as it is told in the Hesiodic accounts and in the *Cypria* of

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[4] In the case of *Apollo* and *Hermes*, this destabilisation is caused by the birth of a new god. *Aphrodite* and *Demeter* concern more particularly the proper relations between gods and men.

[5] See Richardson (2010) on *Apollo*, *Hermes* and *Aphrodite*; Faulkner (2008) and Olson (2012) on *Aphrodite*; Richardson (1974) and Foley (1993) on *Demeter*. See also Penglase (1994) on the shared motifs of these *Hymns* with Mesopotamian myths.

[6] See Clay (1989) 6-7, with bibliography, on different theories of the poems' performance, and Clay's suggestion that they may have belonged in a sympotic context. Clay emphasises, however, that the most important context in which to consider the *Hymns* is that of *epos*.

[7] They are called in the manuscripts Ὁμήρου ὕμνοι; Thucydides (3.104) quotes from the *Hymn to Aphrodite* and ascribes it to Homer – see Richardson (2010) 1-2; Olson (2012) 16-28.

[8] Clay (1989) 154-8.

[9] Some commentators have seen direct textual allusions to the *Iliad*, used as proof of a later dating for the *Hymn* - see Faulkner (2008) 31-4.

the Epic Cycle (discussed below).[10] Because of this, the events of the hymn gain immense cosmic significance, as this liaison between god and mortal turns out to be the last of all such unions, and Aeneas is cast as the final hero ever to be born. We can therefore place these events at a very specific moment in the timescale of the history of gods and men: this is the same moment as is described at the end of the *Catalogue of Women*, when Zeus plans and enacts the ultimate separation of immortals and mortals. The narrative of the hymn therefore aligns itself with the accounts of past time in the Hesiodic poems, but it also offers more of an explanation for this separation.   The *Hymn* as a whole, and in particular Aphrodite's emotive speech to Anchises after she has revealed her identity to him, describes the fundamental differences between gods and men − chiefly of aging and mortality − and explains why it is necessary for the two to be permanently separated.[11] It becomes patently clear by the end of this hymn that all such interactions are now impossible, and therefore looks ahead both to the Trojan war and to the present time.

Although Clay's interpretation is illuminating and important, it only encompasses the four complete longer *Hymns*, and does not bring in the numerous, much shorter, compositions which make up the rest of the collection. These hymns have been studied much less comprehensively than the four longer ones, partly because of their limited length but also because they lack the narrative development which is such a striking feature of those to Demeter, Apollo, Hermes and Aphrodite. However, there is another noticeable difference between the longer and the shorter works of the collection: the shorter hymns seem to be more concerned with the relevance of the gods to everyday human life.   While the longer hymns can be seen to occupy a chronological position preceding the time of the Trojan war, some of these shorter hymns seem to take a different perspective, which is closer to the current age of their audience. For example, the hymn to Hephaestus (20) describes him as the god who brings civilisation to human beings: where once men lived "in mountain caves like beasts" (ναιετάασκον ἐν οὔρεσιν, ἠύτε θῆρες 4), they now "easily live a peaceful life in their own houses all year round" (ῥηιδίως αἰῶνα τελεσφόρον εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν / εὔκηλοι διάγουσιν ἐνὶ σφετέροισι δόμοισιν 6-7). This reflects the lives of the hymn's audience just as much as it refers to the previous age of heroes, as the emphasis is on our distinction from wild animals and the importance of civilisation. The short hymn to Hestia (29) has a similarly domestic focus, invoking her role in men's banquets, and the distribution of wine. Those to Poseidon

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[10] Clay (1989) 168-9.
[11] See Clay (1989) 180-201; Richardson (2010) 243-55; Olson (2012) 231-77.

(22) and the Sons of Zeus (33) both show thanks for the help offered by these gods to sailors at sea. The gods also take the form here of remote natural forces, such as Mother Earth (30), by whom men "are blessed with children and harvests" (εὔπαιδές τε καὶ εὔκαρποι τελέθουσι 5) and who allows the lawful rule of men over towns (11-2). The two hymns to the Sun and Moon (31 and 32) emphasise the universality and remoteness of the gods, and Selene in particular is barely even anthropomorphised. [12]

All of these examples show the gods not as figures in a theogonic or heroic narrative, but in the way that we might see them in our own world, when direct interaction between immortals and mortals has come to an end, but they can still influence our lives from afar, and we are at their mercy. The significance of the ordering of the hymns has been debated, and no single satisfactory theory on the logic or dating of their arrangement has been reached.[13] However, I would suggest that their arrangement, deliberately or not, does seem to reflect a shift in concerns and a changing perspective on the gods. The positioning of these shorter hymns at the end of the collection, which seem to look ahead to the values and anxieties of men of the current age, shows a kind of progression in their conception of the gods from the longer hymns. While their positioning in the sequence is most likely a result of their shorter length rather than their subject matter, this point is still worth noting as it demonstrates the different attitudes to the gods which are necessary at a later stage in the history of the cosmos, and shows that different viewpoints can be expressed in a single poetic format.

The *Homeric Hymns*, then, seem deliberately to position themselves within a traditional history of the cosmos. In the case of the longer hymns, they explain the particular significance of a specific moment in that history. I would add that the shorter hymns may consciously place themselves at a later point in that timescale, and reflect the perspective of the current age of men, to whom the gods are a distant and unknowable force. While they do not set out a programmatic depiction of change over time as the Hesiodic poems do, they gain their mythological context and significance from an awareness of the patterns which shape that change: men become weaker, gods become more distant, and the social structures of human life become more important. While their traditional designation names them as

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[12] Clay (1989), which is the most significant recent study of the hymns, mentions the shorter compositions only insofar as a marker of difference from the four "major" hymns she analyses, and defines the longer hymns as a separate poetic genre – see (1989) 6-8. There has been no significant attempt to expand the work of Clay to include the shorter hymns, because they are lacking extended mythological narrative.

[13] On the arrangement of the hymns are they were transmitted, and the possible date of that arrangement, see Richardson (2010) 3-4 and van der Valk (1976).

Homeric, they nevertheless seem to share an awareness of the traditional history which we found in the Hesiodic poems.

The most significant body of hexameter poetry which I have not yet discussed is the Epic Cycle, the poems of which survive only in fragments and in a prose summary by Proclus.[14] Although ancient and modern scholarship on the Cycle has at times suffered from a prejudice against these poems, whereby it became popular to demonstrate "one's appreciation of Homeric poetry by despising other poems of his tradition",[15] the most recent studies of the poems have come to show that they should be regarded more seriously as alternative examples of narrative hexameter epic. Prominently, Burgess argues that the poems of the Epic Cycle are actually more representative of their tradition than Homer, and that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were not regarded as authoritative examples of their tradition in the Archaic period.[16] While this is convincing, we should not pretend that we are able to study the Epic Cycle poems in a similar way to the Homeric poems, because of their extremely fragmentary preservation. This makes it difficult to reconstruct the lost poems in any convincing way, and most studies of them therefore aim to illuminate the Homeric poems in some way, uncovering possible ways in which they seem to interact with the poems of the Cycle. The Epic Cycle provides ideal material for a neo-analytical or intertextual study. As I describe in the Introduction to this thesis, the earliest of these studies pre-supposed an interaction of written texts, whereas more recent works, such as those by Slatkin, and Barker and Christensen, emphasise the possibility of such allusion and interaction in the context of oral poetry.[17] This kind of approach may therefore have the potential to help us uncover points of similarity between the way the Epic Cycle and the Homeric poems position themselves within a traditional narrative of cosmic history.

A poem of the Epic Cycle which has particular relevance to the aims of this chapter is the *Cypria*, which in antiquity was assigned either to Homer or to Stasinus, who is not coincidentally presented in the tradition as a poet from Cyprus.[18] It is also the subject of an anecdote which combines these two attributions: a story mentioned by Aelian and Photius

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[14] See Burgess (2001) for a thorough explanation of the Cycle's origins and the transmission of Proclus' summary. See also West (2013).
[15] Burgess (2001) 19. Ancient examples of distaste for things "cyclic" can be found in Callimachus and Horace (*Ars Poetica* 136ff) – see Cameron (1995) 387-412 on Callimachus.
[16] Burgess (2001).
[17] Slatkin (1991); Barker and Christensen (2011); see the introduction to this thesis for more on the development of this kind of scholarship.
[18] T1-5 (Davies) ascribes the poem to Homer, T7-11 to Stasinus.

tells how Homer gifted the poem to Stasinus in lieu of a dowry for his daughter.[19] This suggests that the tradition linking Homer to the poem was fairly strong, and it is useful to consider why this may have been the case. It may be that the perceived quality of the work was thought to match the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.   Alternatively, it may result from the close relation in subject-matter between the *Cypria* and the *Iliad*. The events as described in Proclus' summary culminate in the winning of Briseis and Chryseis by Achilles and Agamemnon respectively, and therefore anticipate the opening of the *Iliad* as we know it.[20] Furthermore, the *Cypria* seems to have contained a particular motif which can be seen to link it both with the Hesiodic accounts of the end of the heroes, and with the *Iliad*. While the *Iliad* makes no direct reference to the end of the heroes, it is possible that it includes an indirect allusion to the myth of the heroes' destruction in its very proem. An examination of this allusion and its possible significance to the Iliadic conception of history acts, in the context of this thesis, as a representative example of how we can make use of the evidence of the Epic Cycle to improve our understanding of how the Homeric poems situate themselves in the wider context of hexameter epic.

A scholion to the first book of the *Iliad* encourages us to see a reference to a myth of the heroes' destruction in line five, Διὸς δ᾿ ἐτελείετο βουλή, "the will of Zeus was being accomplished". According to the D scholiast, this line can be seen as an allusion to the plan of Zeus as it was described in the *Cypria*, and he provides a quotation from the poem which seems likely to have come from the beginning of the narrative, after an invocation to the Muse:[21]

<div style="margin-left:3em">

ἦν ὅτε μυρία φῦλα κατὰ χθόνα πλαζόμενα αἰεί   1

ἀνθρώπων ἐβάρυνε βαθυστέρνου πλάτος Αἴης.

Ζεὺς δὲ ἰδὼν ἐλέησε, καὶ ἐν πυκιναὶς πραπίδεσσιν

κουφίσαι ἀνθρώπων παμβώτορα σύνθετο γαῖαν

ῥιπίσσας πολέμου μεγάλην ἔριν Ἰλιακοῖο,   5

ὄφρα κενώσειεν θανάτωι βάρος. οἳ δ᾿ ἐνὶ Τροίηι

ἥρωες κτείνοντο, Διὸς δ᾿ ἐτελείετο βουλή.

There was a time when the countless races of men always   1

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[19] See T1 and T8 (Davies).

[20] On the sequence of the poems of the Cycle, and the possible problems with Proclus' summary, see Burgess (2001) and Davies (1989).

[21] West (2013) 658 provides full textual commentary on this fragment.

roaming across the land were weighing down the deep-breasted earth.

Zeus took pity when he saw this, and in his complex mind

he resolved to relieve the pain of the all-nurturing earth from the weight of

men

by fanning the great conflict of the Trojan war,   5

to rid the burden through death. So the heroes at Troy

kept being killed, and the will of Zeus was being accomplished.

Cypria F1 (Davies)

In line seven of this fragment, we see the same phrase as is used in line 5 of the *Iliad* proem (Διὸς δ᾽ ἐτελείετο βουλή, "the will of Zeus was being accomplished"), and the context of the *Cypria* explains what this "plan" or "will" of Zeus is: to reduce the world population and lighten the burden on the earth, by killing the heroes at Troy.[22] The scholiast gives further details in his introduction to the quoted passage: Gaia pleads with Zeus to help her in her distress; Momus ("blame") acts as counsellor to Zeus;[23] and the Theban war as well as the Trojan is presented as a way to cause depopulation on a large scale. Momus' advice to Zeus includes the marriage of Thetis to a mortal, and the birth of a beautiful daughter, thus introducing Achilles and Helen as twin agents of the Trojan war, and alluding to the judgement of Paris.[24] These additional details may have been included in the fuller narrative of the *Cypria*, or they may have come from some other part of the tradition, but they do not alter the main thrust of the myth which we can discern from this *Cypria* fragment: the Trojan war is part of a deliberate plan by Zeus to kill off the heroes and decrease the population of the earth. The war therefore takes up the role which in other traditions is played by a great flood or a plague, and the heroes are being deliberately and systematically destroyed by the gods.[25]

The *Cypria*'s story of the destruction of the heroes has parallels in the Hesiodic poems, as seen in the previous chapter of this thesis. In the *Works and Days*, the heroes are

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[22] Eustathius makes the same link between the *Iliad* proem and the myth of destruction; he explicitly mentions Achilles and Helen as the twin agents of the war, and names Momus as Zeus' advisor in the matter (*ad Iliadem* 1.44.15 *TLG*).

[23] In Proclus' summary, Themis here takes the role of counsellor instead of Momus; this is the extent of Proclus' reference to the myth. See West (2013) 68.

[24] West (2013) 68-9; see also *Cypria* F2-4 and 10-11 (Davies).

[25] For parallels in non-Greek traditions, see Nagy (1990) 15, Burkert (1992) 102; Mayer (1996) 4-8, West (2013) 66. Scodel (1982) 42-3 argues that a war is an unsuitable tool for depopulation on a grand scale, and that the depopulation theme is likely to have originated in myths of a deluge or other force of nature.

destroyed by "evil war and cruel battle" (πόλεμός τε κακὸς καὶ φύλοπις αἰνή 161), some of them at Thebes and some of them at Troy (162-5). The heroes are destined to two fates: some are taken by death, just as mortals are, and some are transported to a separate existence on the Isles of the Blessed (μακάρων νήσοισι 171). This double fate, which reflects their semi-divine heritage, is somewhat ambiguous, and it is not explained how the division is made or why some are chosen to share a better fate.[26] Although it is clear that the heroes are eradicated from the earth, their destruction is less clearly defined than was the case for the preceding three races, and there is less of a marked gap between them and the iron race. I argue in chapter 1 that this has important implications for how we are to understand the relationship between the heroes and our own race; it suggests a genealogical continuity between the two types of men.

In the *Catalogue of Women*, a more detailed account is given of how the time of the heroes came to a conclusion. This seems to have much in common with the version of the *Cypria* referred to by the scholiast.[27] As in the *Cypria*, Zeus is included as the agent of the heroes' destruction. Although there is no reference to a "plan of Zeus", he is described as devising deeds which will "stir up trouble" (μεῖξαι ... τυρβάξας fr. 204.97-8) on earth. The actual process, and the details of Zeus' intentions, are difficult to ascertain from this fragmentary part of the text, but two things are clear:[28] gods and men are to be separated permanently, and the Trojan war is what will bring this separation into effect. The latter is clear from the context, as the destruction of the heroes follows immediately after the marriage of Helen to Menelaus, so we can infer that the event which will cause the war is imminent. The separation of gods and men is here made to be synonymous with the end of the heroes. They are called ἡμίθεοι (100)[29] to emphasise their half-human, half-divine heritage – once gods can no longer mingle with men, no more heroes can be born. Successive generations will be mortal, and as the generations pass they will become further removed from the divine. The account of the *Catalogue* can therefore be interpreted as a combination of a single cataclysmic event and a gradual process. The separation of gods and men is a single event

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[26] It is possible to interpret these lines as referring to the same fate for all the heroes: they died, and were then taken to the Isles of the Blessed - see Verdenius (1985) 101-2. This would allow more consistency with the Homeric poems, in which it is emphasised that all must die. See Nagy (1979) for the conception of immortality after death, not instead of death, for the heroes.

[27] See also the final section of chapter 1 of this thesis.

[28] West (1961) gives the fullest reconstruction of these lines.

[29] On this significance of ἡμίθεοι as a designation for the heroes, see Clay (1996). See also below in this chapter, on the single instance of the word in the Homeric poems.

which has repercussions over a period of time, and the Trojan war acts to accelerate that separation by killing off the last of the demi-gods.

In both of the Hesiodic accounts, in the *Works and Days* and in the *Catalogue*, the advent of the human condition as we know it follows immediately after the destruction of the heroes. *Works and Days* describes this in moral terms in its account of the iron race, and the whole of the rest of the poem is similarly concerned with advice on how best to live in the world as it is now, particularly how to cope with the natural cycle of the seasons. In the *Catalogue*, the human condition is reflected in the hardship of the first winter (124-8). This change in the conditions of human life is presented as the result of a single unique event, the end of the heroes, but the implications of that change are ongoing, and as inevitable as the coming and going of the seasons. Our genealogical connection with the heroic race, which is ongoing but diminishing in closeness as generations pass, is co-existent with the notion of the heroes' total destruction, just as our defining differences from the heroes are co-existent with our continuity from them. The destruction of the heroes seems to follow a broadly consistent pattern throughout the Hesiodic poems and the Cycle, but is this pattern reflected in the *Iliad* too?

Although the D scholiast saw a link between the Διὸς βουλή of the *Iliad*, and the myth of destruction as told in the *Cypria*, this has not been the most common interpretation in recent studies of the *Iliad* proem. Usually, the "will of Zeus" in *Iliad* 1.5 is taken to refer to the promise Zeus makes to Thetis at the end of book one, to give temporary victory to the Trojans in order to honour Achilles.[30] This interpretation is confined to the scope of the *Iliad* itself, and the phrase therefore acts as an appropriately programmatic statement to be found in the proem. However, the very fact that the scholiast saw in the proem to the *Iliad* an allusion to the story of the *Cypria* proves that such a link is possible, and may have often been noticed by ancient audiences.

The question of whether line five of the *Iliad* proem makes an allusion to the myth of destruction as told in the *Cypria* is really a question about how intertextuality operates within the hexameter tradition, and for this reason there are multiple approaches to this issue.

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[30] Willcock (1978); Kirk (1985) 53; West (1997) 348. Redfield (1979) argues that it must have a specific meaning, and he connects it to a prophecy about a quarrel between the Achaeans, which in the *Odyssey* is misinterpreted by Menelaus (*Od*.8.79-82). Schein (1984) 59-60 goes so far as to conclude that the "plan of Zeus" in the context of the proem is really the "plan of Achilles". Davies (1989:34) interprets the *Iliad* 1.5 as being deliberately ambiguous; the possibility that this is a complex allusion to multiple events is explored by Slatkin (1991) 118-22. See also Allan (2008).

Finkelberg argues that the *Iliad* presents its own version of the Trojan war as authoritative, and creates a strong sense of continuity between the heroes and the present time, by deliberately suppressing the story of the *Cypria*.[31] Mayer suggests that an allusion to the myth of destruction helps us to understand the significance of Helen's role in the war; she is responsible for the war not because of any single action or transgression, but by the fact of her very existence.[32] Scodel argues that the Homeric narrator is aware of the myth of destruction, but here turns it to his own purposes, and uses the "plan of Zeus" to refer only to events within the *Iliad* itself.[33] Marks demonstrates how the theme of the "plan of Zeus" to destroy the heroes formed the guiding theme of the *Cypria*, and reached beyond that poem to encompass all events related to the war.[34] Marks shows just how ambiguous the diction of the *Iliad* proem is, so that the "plan of Zeus" could either predate or postdate the anger of Achilles.[35] In the same vein, Murnaghan stresses the all-encompassing nature of the "will of Zeus", the ultimate purpose of which is to maintain his own sovereignty and continually remind men of their mortality.[36] This means that it is up to the audience to decide how to interpret the *Iliad* proem – if they have awareness of the wider tradition of the myth of destruction, they may choose to see here an allusion to it, but it would be equally as valid to see line five as a reference to events within the *Iliad* itself, without any allusion to a broader context. This possibility of a double meaning is most consistent with the kind of intertextual methodology used by Pucci and Burgess, in which no single reading is privileged above others, and which takes into account the part of the audience in constructing meaning.[37] This flexible interpretation is most in keeping with the aims and concerns of this thesis. It shows that it is possible, although not necessary, to read the proem of the *Iliad* in the context of the myth of the *Cypria*. The question that remains is whether this reading adds anything to our understanding of either text.

Importantly, an allusion to the myth of the *Cypria* is consistent with the concerns of the *Iliad* as a whole. The perception of the warriors at Troy as the very last of their kind

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[31] Finkelberg (2004); the pervasiveness of the theme of destruction throughout the Hesiodic poems and the *Cypria* makes it highly unlikely that the *Iliad* could have been completely unaware of it (2004) 13. See also Finkelberg (2000).

[32] Mayer (1996) 12-3 argues that Helen takes the same role as Pandora in Hesiod – she is a curse in herself. See chapter 3 on how the Homeric poems reflect on this significance.

[33] Scodel (1982) 47.

[34] Marks (2002).

[35] Marks (2002) 15-6.

[36] Murnaghan (1997). The plan of Zeus is eternally ongoing, and encompasses numerous episodes (such as those related in the Iliad) within this overall plan: this is why the accomplishment of his plan in the *Cypria* and the *Iliad* is expressed in the imperfect tense - Διὸς δ᾽ ἐτελείετο βουλή.

[37] See Pucci (1987), (1998); Burgess (2001), (2006).

before the total elimination of their race adds urgency and poignancy to the central struggles of Achilles; it also marks a dividing line of difference between the heroes and ourselves, while allowing a sense of connection in their relative proximity as the very last of the previous race of men. While the myth of destruction is an important way in which the Hesiodic poems, and the *Cypria*, present the change from the time of the heroes to our own age, the different emphasis of the Homeric poems, with a much narrower temporal focus, means that the story is not included in the narrative in any explicit way. However, there is no reason for us to definitively conclude that the *Iliad* denies, suppresses, or ignores such a story. It is entirely in keeping with the portrayal of the heroes in the poem that they are the last of their kind. If an audience of the *Iliad* were aware of the destruction myth as told in the *Cypria*, there is no reason to think they would be confused or see a contradiction between the poems: the evidence of the scholiast to the *Iliad* proem shows how easily links can be made between the two. The prominence of the myth of destruction may vary in the minds of different audiences, and it would not necessarily lessen an audience's understanding of the Homeric poem if they have no knowledge of the *Cypria* story. What is important is that there is no reason for us to find a conflict between these different parts of the hexameter tradition; the ways in which the poems show continuity with one another are more significant than the possible moments of contradiction. We may therefore have reason to believe that the different poems are drawing on a shared traditional narrative of the history of gods and men.

Also relevant to the present study are the poems of the Epic Cycle which take as their subject the two campaigns against Thebes. In the myth of the five races, Thebes is named alongside Troy as the place where many heroes were killed (*Works and Days* 162-5), and therefore plays a significant role in the traditional history of the cosmos. Two poems told the stories of these two expeditions: the first, unsuccessful assault led by the Seven was described in the *Thebaid*, and the second campaign led by the sons of the Seven was the subject of the *Epigoni*, both of which are positioned in Proclus' summary immediately before the *Cypria*.[38] While very little remains of the *Epigoni*, more clues survive about what may have been contained in the *Thebaid*. Whereas the *Cypria* had a strong tradition of being attributed both to Homer and to another poet, Stasinus, the *Thebaid* has the most persistent association with Homer of all the lost poems. Pausanias (T1 Davies) says that Callinus attributed it to Homer, and "many worthy [scholars]" (πολλοί τε καὶ ἄξιοι) agreed with him on this; for Pausanias himself, the *Thebaid* is the best of the poems after the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. It is also named

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[38] The most thorough study of the Theban section of the Epic Cycle is Davies (2014).

as a work of Homer's in a *Life of Homer* by Pseudo-Herodotus, and in the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*.[39] As with the *Cypria*, this attribution could have been encouraged by the links in subject-matter between the *Thebaid* and the *Iliad*, which could have been seen as mirroring one another in their treatment of the two great wars that ended the time of the heroes. The high poetic quality appreciated by Pausanias suggests there were also similarities of style with the Homeric poems.

Furthermore, it is clear that the *Iliad* is aware of the tradition of the Theban war, as it makes several explicit allusions to it, including specific references to Tydeus in the presentation of the Homeric Diomedes.[40] I return to these allusions later in this chapter, in a case study which examines how far the comparisons between these two generations reflect traditional patterns of change over the whole history of mankind. For the moment, we have gained an impression of the most relevant hexameter poems which form the wider poetic context of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The *Homeric Hymns*, short and long, build upon and explain the traditional patterns of history which we find in the Hesiodic poems, and the *Cypria* can help us to understand how the Trojan war fits into that history. The *Thebaid* mirrors the *Iliad* in its presentation of a single great war, but as we see later in this chapter, it also shows the great differences between generations in its presentation of father and son. I now direct my attention to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, to explore how far the traditional patterns of change, decline and progress over time may be reflected at certain moments in these individual poems.

There are four instances in the *Iliad* when the poet makes an explicit comparison between the characters of his poem, and the men of his own time (and the time of his audience, which I approach as including modern readers too). All these passages share a common phrase – οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσίν, "such as mortals are now" – which is a clear indicator of decline. Each time the phrase is used, it reminds the audience that the heroes of the poem are different in some way from men "such as mortals are now". In the passages in question, a warrior is lifting a great rock which he will use as a weapon. In three of these instances, the further detail is added that even two men of the current age could not lift such a huge object. A close study of this formulaic phrase should help us to understand exactly

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[39] T2 and F1 Davies. See Graziosi (2002) on the ancient tradition of Homer's life and works attributed to him.
[40] Ebbott (2010) presents an analysis of how the *Iliad* may be referring to traditional stories about the Theban campaign. See Alden (2000) 153-178 on the *Iliad*'s use of heroic genealogies in para-narratives, and the importance of these genealogies as patterns of behaviour.

what constitutes this great different in strength between the two ages of men, and how far this reflects traditional patterns of change through cosmic history.

It is noticeable that this phrase is used twice of a Greek warrior, and twice of a Trojan; there is no division here between the two opposing armies, which strengthens the comparison with men of later generations. Rather than focusing on the differences between opposing armies, here the emphasis is on their shared characteristics, which in turn differentiate them from men of a later time. The use of νῦν to refer to the present time is unique to these passages, and establishes a temporal distance between the action of the poem and the reception of that poem by the audience. This places the poet within the same temporal context as his audience, whether that audience is listening to an oral performance in archaic Greece, or is a modern reader. In contrast to the voice of the poet in the Hesiodic poems, the Homeric narrator does not draw attention to himself or define his personal perspective on events, so these instances are all the more noticeable for their rarity.[41] However, each of these four uses of οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσιν occurs in the voice of the poet. This means it is the poet who is drawing the comparison between the two types of men – heroes and current mortals – and encouraging the audience to do the same. This phrase must therefore have significance to the poet's conception of how the world of the *Iliad* is different from his own world. The bT scholiast infers from this that a great distance of time separates the poet from the heroes (πολλῷ κατωτέρω τῶν ἡρωϊκῶν ἐστι· διὸ τῷ διαστήματι τοῦ χρόνου πιστοῦται τὰς ὑπεροχὰς τῶν ἡρώων) – the difference in strength between the two types of men is equated with their different places in time.[42]

In the context of the wider hexameter tradition, the construction also brings to mind the repeated ἢ᾽ οἵη which is a characteristic feature of the *Catalogue of Women*, and provides an alternative title for the work.[43] In the case of the *Catalogue*, this construction is used to refer back to the heroic age, in a timeframe clearly set out in the proem, and give illustrative examples of women who slept with gods and generated illustrious families.[44] In the *Iliad*, οἷοι is used to make references in the opposite direction, looking ahead from the time of the

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[41] See Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 122-5 on the defining differences between the two poets and their representation.
[42] Sch. *Il.* (bT) 5.304
[43] See West (1985) 1-2 with bibliography, on the alternative title and the distinction between the Ἠοῖαι and the Μεγάλαι Ἠοῖαι; see also chapter 1 of this thesis for the questions of unity and authenticity which surround the *Catalogue*.
[44] Fragment 1 (M-W) sets out the specific timeframe, at the end of the age of heroes. See chapter 1, above, on the significance of this temporal positioning and the content of the *Catalogue* as a whole.

action to the time of the audience. An audience familiar with the repeated ἠ' οἵη of the *Catalogue* may be reminded of those women and their semi-divine offspring in such a way as to make the comparison with modern men even starker. There must have been a strong association between this kind of relative pronoun and the tradition of the *Catalogue* for ancient audiences, as evidenced by the use of the title *Ehoiai* by several ancient critics and scholiasts.[45] If this is the case, the use of the Iliadic phrase is made more striking for those familiar with the *Catalogue*, as the glorious days of women sleeping with gods are implicitly contrasted with the present time of weakened and inferior men. If we do detect this kind of allusive link between the Homeric and Hesiodic formulae, it is noticeable that there is a gender distinction between the two instances. While the women of the *Catalogue* used their procreative power to bring men closer to the gods, and create genealogical continuity between ages, the violent strength of the Iliadic male heroes emphasises the break between generations. Although the two formulae are found in different contexts, and have different purposes, this seems to echo the gendered tension of the divine succession, in which the female promotes reproduction and genealogical progress, while the male acts violently to prevent genealogical continuity. Although these different instances do not map onto one another exactly, but they do share the strong sense that men and women have different roles in the processes of cosmic history.

Looking at the *Iliad* passages in more detail, we may find some evidence of why the οἷοι νῦν formula is used in these specific episodes. The first of the relevant passages concerns Diomedes (5.290-310). During his *aristeia* of book five, Diomedes has just killed Pandarus when Aeneas advances towards him to attempt to retrieve the Trojan's body. In order to drive him away, Diomedes lifts a great rock and hurls it at Aeneas, hitting him at the joint of the hip and rendering him unconscious. Diomedes' use of the rock is almost devastatingly powerful, and it is only the intervention of Aphrodite that preserves Aeneas from death after he is hit (311-13). Similarly effective is Ajax's use of the rock at 12.378-86, which kills Epicles. This instance differs subtly from the other three uses of the phrase as the poet does not emphasise the hero's strength by saying that even two modern men could not easily lift the rock. Instead, Ajax's rock could not be easily lifted "with both hands" – χείρεσσ' ἀμφοτέρῃς (382). Although different imagery is employed, this phrase has the same

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[45] West (1985) 1 names Philodemus, Pausanias, Athenaeus and Eunapius as using this title; Hesiod is mentioned as the author of the Ἠοῖαι by the scholiast to Sophocles *Women of Trachis* 1167, and Pindar *Pythian* 9.6.

doubling effect as the image of two men, because of the emphasis on two hands.[46] The damage wrought by Ajax's throw is expressed more graphically than Aeneas' injury – Epicles' helmet is shattered, his skull is crushed, and he falls "like a diver" (385-6) to his death. In both of these passages, the strength of the respective Achaean heroes is immense and clearly evident, and emphasising that strength is the immediate purpose of the comparison with modern men.

The other two passages, however, have a slightly different impact, although they use the same comparative phrase. Shortly after Ajax has killed Epicles, Hector lifts a great rock, and his strength is emphasised by the detail that not even two modern men could lift it easily (12.445-462). Here, this emphasis is increased with the addition of δήμου ἀρίστω in line 447; even the best of modern men could not match Hector. The first indication that this passage is different from the previous examples comes in line 450, which states that Zeus had made the rock light for him. This line was rejected by Zenodotus, Aristophanes and Aristarchus, and apparently with sound reason. It diminishes Hector's heroic strength in comparison with the two Greeks who have performed similar deeds, and when studied in the context of those other similar scenes, the line may look like an unnecessary addition.[47] However, it would not be inconsistent with the behaviour of Zeus elsewhere if he did help Hector to lift the rock. Zeus does offer help less directly than other gods, and never visits the battlefield in person, instead preferring to reveal his support in portents, such as the wind he conjures at 12.251-255. That wind had blasted dust against the ships, bewildering the Achaeans and giving the Trojans the advantage. It is therefore consistent with Zeus' involvement at this point in the battle that he would help Hector to lift the rock – and in keeping with his especial care for Hector elsewhere in the poem.[48] Furthermore, Hector uses the rock for something even more devastating than the damage inflicted by Diomedes and Ajax in previous instances: it acts as a battering ram to force entry through the Achaean wall

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[46] χείρεσσ᾽ ἀμφοτέρης is a correction by Aristarchus of the vulgate reading χειρί γε τῇ ἑτέρῃ, but this correction has "considerable MS support", according to Hainsworth (1993) 358. It may be that the corrected reading seemed more appropriate to Aristarchus and later editors precisely because of the doubling effect which means Ajax's strength is expressed to the same degree as it is for other heroes of whom the phrase is used.

[47] As West (2001) 220-1 points out, modern scholarship has a different understanding of divine assistance from that of the ancients, and does not see it as "diminishing the hero's credit". West goes on to claim that the opposition between heroes and men of the current age is not the point of the comparison here; rather the antithesis is between men of the δῆμος and the διοτρεφὴς βασιλεύς, who receives help from Zeus. West therefore regards line 449, where οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσιν is used, to be inappropriate; he believes the line was interpolated by "a rhapsode who missed the point".   I hope to have shown that the phrase in each of its uses is not only appropriate, but has a powerful significance.

[48] At 15.12-30, Zeus takes pity on the sight of Hector and tells Hera that he cares for him more than he did for Heracles.

and into their camp. This is not only a crucial point in the narrative, but it also helps to fulfil part of the "plan of Zeus" (Διὸς βουλή) for the Trojans to reach the Greek ships.[49] Hector's great deed is bolstered firstly by the comparison to current men, and then further by the support he receives from Zeus. However, we can also see here an internal comparison between Hector and those Greeks who have already lifted such a great rock. If Hector needs Zeus' help to lift the rock, this suggests that he is weaker than his Achaean counterparts, but, crucially, he is still far stronger than the best men of the current age. If we do see here a sign of the comparative weakness of Hector compared to Diomedes and Ajax, it increases the power of the comparison with the much weaker men of today.

The fourth of the relevant passages also concerns a Trojan, but is uniquely lacking in the violence found in the other passages (20.283-91). Aeneas, in combat with Achilles, lifts a great rock, and the poet uses exactly the same phrasing as he does for Diomedes in book five. An audience who remembered that previous scene would therefore know exactly what to expect – Aeneas will hurl the rock at Achilles and wound him badly. This potential action is narrated by the poet in lines 288-91, with the hypothetical consequences that Achilles would then kill Aeneas in retaliation. However, that course of events is prevented by Poseidon, who, after consulting with Hera, sheds a mist over Achilles' eyes and transports Aeneas from danger before he can cast the missile (318-29). This is one example of what Morrison calls a "reversal passage", where the poet presents the possibility of events occurring which are beyond tradition, or fate (ὑπερ μοῖραν).[50] As it would be "beyond fate" for Aeneas to be killed in battle, the destructive power of the rock lifted by Aeneas is frustrated. His lack of action here is also consistent with his portrayal throughout the poem, where his role is downplayed in favour of Hector. Furthermore, his rescue by Poseidon is reminiscent of Aphrodite's intervention in book five, when it had been Diomedes who threw the rock. The similarities between these scenes emphasise that Aeneas cannot be killed before Troy falls, as it is already fated that he will continue his bloodline, as Poseidon explains at 20.302-8. Aeneas has just the same extraordinary strength in this scene as the other heroes do, but it is vital for the traditional sequence of events that he is not killed as a result of that strength. The intervention of the gods in three of these four passages suggests a link between the heroes' immense strength, and their relationship with the Olympians. Just as men "as they are now" would not be able to lift the great rocks, neither would they be able to rely on divine support

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[49] Zeus describes that this is ordained at 8.470-7.
[50] Morrison (1992) 61-71. Such "contrafactual" passages are also discussed by de Jong (1987) 68-81.

or intervention. These passages therefore demonstrate not just the declining strength of men over time, but also our decreasing relationship with the gods. The Homeric passages in this way seem to reflect some aspects of the patterns of change we encounter in the Hesiodic accounts of history.

This particular formula therefore demonstrates a clear difference in strength between the men of two different ages. In the previous chapter, we saw that Hesiodic depictions of the heroes also emphasise a sense of continuity between them and men of our own time. Such a link is not immediately suggested by the οἷοι νῦν passages, but it may be implied by the language used here, and in particular the use of βροτοί as the subject of the comparison. The difference between gods and men in Homer is defined by a number of binary oppositions, of which the noun βροτός – mortal – is a good example.[51] In these passages, it is used to refer to the weakened men of the current age, but throughout the Homeric poems it is used to refer to the heroes, who are, as Achilles says, "wretched mortals" (δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι *Il.* 24.525) subject to the whims of the gods, just as we are. This is the most important kind of continuity which was found in the Hesiodic poems: despite all their manifold differences, each of the five races of mankind created by the gods were mortal. Even in the *Catalogue*, when gods and men slept together and created magnificent children, the divide between immortal and mortal was never breached completely. Although the *Iliad*'s comparisons emphasise the awe-inspiring difference in strength between the two types of men, the use of βροτοί is a reminder of their common mortality. In this, the way the Homeric narrator conceives of the change which has occurred in the intervening generations does not diverge from the patterns we find in Hesiod.

It is noticeable that in each of the passages under discussion, the hero in question is using not a spear or a sword to attack his opponent, but a rock (χερμάδιον), and this may be significant. The noun χερμάδιον is etymologically linked to χείρ, "hand", suggesting it refers to a large rock or stone that can be held in the hand, opposed to a more massive boulder.[52] This link perhaps adds emphasis to the difference in strength between the heroes and men of the current age, as it is clearly stated that the latter would not be able to lift such a χερμάδιον in their hand. In general, the use of rocks as weapons of war is presented as fairly common in

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[51] Uses of βροτοί to express the differences between gods and men can be found at 6.142, 12.327, 19.21-2, 24.464, 24.525.Hermes calls himself θεὸς ἄμβροτος at 24.460, Apollo a θεὸν ἄμβροτον at 22.9; unlike βροτός, it is never used as a noun, but always as an adjective (also to describe armour at 17.194 and clothing at 16.670). See Clay (1981).

[52] Kirk (1990) 395.

the *Iliad*,[53] and Ajax at one point says he will not yield to any mortal who eats grain or "can be pierced by bronze or crushed with great rocks" (χαλκῷ τε ῥηκτὸς μεγάλοισί τε χερμαδίοισιν 13.323), which suggests that the use of rocks in battle is a defining feature of mortal men. However, the instances of individuals using rocks in close combat are fairly few – only three warriors, other than those in the οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσίν passages, make use of rocks in this way. Those three are Antilochus (5.582), Ajax (14.410) and Peiros (4.518). In the cases of Antilochus and Peiros, the throws cause devastating damage, and the opponent is then swiftly killed with a sword thrust. When Ajax throws a rock, its target is Hector, and he too is brought to the ground and badly injured, to be saved only when he is surrounded and protected from a fatal blow by Trojan comrades. Hector later describes the incident to Apollo, saying that he thought he would die, and Apollo reveals that Zeus had saved him (15.248-52). The use of rocks in close combat is therefore always fatal, unless the target is saved by divine intervention, as Aeneas is in the passage above (5.311-13).

The scene between Ajax and Hector in book fourteen is of further interest because it gives more detail of what type of rocks are being used in battle. In this case, it is the rocks that had been used as props for the Achaean ships (as described at 1.486; 2.154), but now they have come loose and are rolling around the men's feet as they fight (πὰρ ποσὶ μαρναμένων ἐκυλίνετο 14.411). This phrase is similar to the description of helmets that lie on the ground after they have been knocked from their owners' heads (13.379; 13.526), and is therefore suggestive in itself of violence and disorder. The two roles that these rocks have fulfilled – first to support the Greek ships, then as a simple weapon – can be seen as representing an opposition between culture and nature. Ships are themselves an example of man's mastery of the natural world, using natural materials to create a vessel in which to navigate the seas, and so the use of rocks as supports for the ships on dry land makes the rocks themselves an instrument of culture. The use of the rocks as missiles, however, is not cultured, and is quite different from the use of man-made, crafted weapons such as spears and swords. The image of a warrior casting a rock at an opponent, and that rock causing fatal injuries, is much more primal. Such primitive, uncontrolled violence is more reminiscent of Hesiod's bronze race than his account of the heroes, and shows that it is not possible to map the Homeric account directly onto the Hesiodic. However, we may here be able to see evidence of the third type of change noticeable in *Works and Days* – social progression,

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[53] Rocks are mentioned as commonplace weapons at 11.265; 16.774; and 12.154-8, in which they are so numerous they are likened to snowflakes.

which we have seen to increase as the other two aspects decline. While the heroes are stronger than us, and closer to the gods, they are here shown to have some remnant primitivism, as the process of change is ongoing. That is why the οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσίν passages all describe a hero throwing a rock, not a sword or a spear. The point of the comparison is to demonstrate the difference between them, and the current age of men, and the rocks themselves are representative of that difference. The four repeated uses of this phrase therefore seem to reflect all three patterns of change described by the Hesiodic accounts, and show the process of change underway. When the heroes are compared to us, we can see that we have become weaker and further detached from the gods, but also that we have the potential for more sophisticated forms of civilisation.

The four passages studied so far have contained the phrase οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσίν in the voice of the poet, but there is one further, almost identical, use of the phrase in the voice of Nestor. This is the first use of such a phrase in the *Iliad*, and comes as Nestor speaks to the Achaean assembly in book one:

<div align="center">

…κείνοισι δ᾽ ἄν οὔ τις

τῶν οἳ νῦν βροτοί εἰσιν ἐπιχθόνιοι μαχέοιτο

</div>

<div align="right">

Il. 1.271-2.

</div>

This is very similar to the comparison made by the poet in the other passages; no-one of the mortals who are alive now could fight the men of previous generations, whom Nestor has described in the preceding ten lines. The use of such a comparison here is striking, because it is employed to demonstrate the comparative weakness of the heroes of the *Iliad*, whereas from the previous examples we might have assumed that they were the ultimate example of strength. As Nestor uses the comparison in direct address to the warriors in front of him at the assembly, we can assume that he has the intention of reprimanding them specifically for their in-fighting by reminding them that former ages were superior; he is comparing individuals with other individuals, rather than whole generations. Nestor uses the phrase to belittle his audience, whereas the poet uses it to impress his listeners with the awesome strength of his characters.

Nestor's comparison in book one is the only instance in the poem when οἷ(οι) νῦν βροτοί εἰσίν is used in direct speech. The scholia do not comment upon the use of this formula by Nestor, perhaps because it is so much in keeping with his characterisation

throughout the poem, and so does not seem remarkable. It is, after all, reflective of his unique role in the poem as one who possesses the same long-term temporal perspective as the poet.[54] For Nestor, memory and knowledge of the past does not come from a privileged relationship with the Muse such as the poet has, but from his own experiences. As he is older than anyone else in the poem, he can remember further back, and is therefore the only character who can compare the warriors at Troy with personal experience of previous generations. When Agamemnon tries to make this kind of comparison, between Diomedes and his father Tydeus, he is open to being challenged and contradicted by Sthenelus because he does not have personal knowledge of Tydeus, never having met him. The knowledge of a good poet, on the other hand, is so clear and correct, that it seems as if he must have been there himself; such is the praise Odysseus gives to Demodocus after he hears him sing of Troy *(Odyssey* 8.487-491). When Nestor refers to previous ages, he really was there himself, fighting alongside the warriors of former generations, and so he can perceive and express the generational change that has occurred since then. Importantly, Nestor's use of the comparison to previous ages demonstrates that physical decline is not a recent phenomenon that has occurred since the time of the Trojan War, but a gradual process that had begun even before then.

Nestor's use of this kind of comparison is similar to the only use of the formula in the *Odyssey*. This is also in direct speech, as Odysseus prepares to vie with the Phaeacians in athletic games, and warns his hosts that he is not to be beaten in archery. Only Philoctetes could ever beat him at Troy, he says, but:

τῶν δ᾽ ἄλλων ἐμέ φημι πολὺ προφερέστερον εἶναι,

ὅσσοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσιν ἐπὶ χθονὶ σῖτον ἔδοντες.

Od. 8.221-2.

The immediate context and significance of Odysseus' boast is quite unlike Nestor's comparison. He boldly declares himself to be the best archer of all men now alive, a

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[54] Dickson (1995) argues that Nestor is unique in his personal memory of past events (71-2) and at several points in the poem takes on the role of poet. He does not have the privilege of divine inspiration, but instead he is "his own Muse" (90-1). Alden (2000) 74-111 also emphasises Nestor's unique perspective, which allows him to use his own memory of past events to present paradigms of behaviour for the current age of heroes. Grethlein (2012) 14-36 refers to the period recalled by Nestor as the "epic plupast"; he argues that the way Nestor thinks about this prior time is the same as the way archaic Greek audiences thought of the epic past, as a source for traditional legitimacy and paradigms of behaviour. See Grethlein and Krebs (2012) for the application of this notion of the "plupast" to historiographical texts.

powerful superlative which is proven correct by his actions not only in this book but in his final encounter with the Suitors. He goes on to qualify his declaration, saying that he would not vie with "the men of former days" (ἀνδράσι δὲ προτέροισιν 223) such as Heracles or Eurytus; they are implied to be inherently superior by nature of their earlier generation, just like the men Nestor uses to denigrate his audience of Greeks at Troy. We can see the same patterns of change at work here as were suggested by the passages of the *Iliad*, despite the differing narrative context of Odysseus' boast.[55] The clearest implication of all these uses of the οἷοι νῦν formula is that the physical strength of men is declining steadily over each generation.

We can see the consequences of this physical decline in a specific example involving Nestor. While we would expect a very old man to seem weaker compared to his younger comrades, one Iliadic passage suggests the opposite: that Nestor's great age actually means he is stronger than the other Greeks. When Patroclus and Machaon visit Nestor in his hut, the slave woman Hecamede serves them a reviving drink in a beautiful cup – δέπας περικαλλές (11.632). The cup's luxurious decoration is described, and then its weight and size are suggested by the following motif:[56]

ἄλλος μὲν μογέων ἀποκινήσασκε τραπέζης

πλεῖον ἐόν, Νέστωρ δ᾽ ὁ γέρων ἀμογητὶ ἄειρεν.

Il. 11.636-7.

It has not always been accepted that this is a straightforward expression of Nestor's strength. The comment of a scholiast suggests that it was seen as a conventional compliment, not a genuine comparison, and some have suggested that it is humorous in intention, or shows that Nestor has a special knack for lifting the cup, rather than demonstrating his superior strength.[57] In his commentary on this passage, Hainsworth suggests that it is more reasonable to understand that Nestor's cup is reserved exclusively for his own use, as is Achilles' cup at 16.225.[58] However, all these suggestions seem to avoid the simplest explanation: that Nestor really is the only one capable of lifting his cup, because he is the

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[55] These narrative differences are themselves illustrative of the differing context of the the two poems: while the Iliadic passages describe deadly warfare, Odysseus' boast appears in a scene of athletic competition without any such threat.

[56] The motif of an object being so heavy that it can only be lifted by its owner is also used in relation to Achilles, of his spear (16.141-4) and the door-bar to his hut (24.455-6).

[57] Sch. 11.637 Arn/A ; Powell (1989) 339.

[58] Hainsworth (1993) 293.

strongest. Grethlein supports this interpretation, and argues that the emphasis on Nestor's age suggests that this is what makes him stronger than everyone else.[59] He argues that Nestor's age and strength are linked in the way that the heroes' strength is emphasised in the οἷοι νῦν passages – that the "relationship between the heroes' past and their present mirrors the relationship between the epic past and the present of the epic performance".[60] Just as the heroes are stronger than we are, Nestor is stronger than the heroes of the next generation precisely because of his age.

This study of the οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσίν passage reveals certain important details about how the Homeric poems seem to conceive of the similarities and differences between the characters at Troy and the men of their own time. The most obvious difference is that the former ages are much stronger physically, but they also have a closer relationship with the gods which means they can be directly assisted, and even rescued from death, in battle. The use of rocks rather than crafted weapons in these passages may also be suggestive of a more primitive society than our own, and encourages us to see the warriors at Troy as part of a transitional culture. Although the explicit purpose of the comparative phrase is to show contrast, it also reminds us of the similarities which are shared by men across the ages – chiefly, our mortality and our difference from the gods. These similarities and differences echo the patterns found in Hesiodic poetry, wherein individual weakening and distancing from the gods is balanced by an increase in social strength.

While the use of rocks in battle, and the great weight of Nestor's cup, show how men deteriorate in physical strength as generations pass, another episode of the *Iliad* shows how objects can act as evidence of the societal progress of men through the ages. In the funeral games for Patroclus, Achilles offers as one of the prizes a mass of iron (23.826-35). This at first seems a rather mundane object, after the other prizes of tripods, silver bowls, serving women, oxen, and talents of gold.[61] This particular lump of iron, however, has an illustrious history; it was used as the discus or throwing-weight of Eetion, and was taken from him by Achilles when he sacked his city.[62] It would therefore make sense for Achilles to present the prize in this light, as the glorious spoils of war, but he does not describe the object in these terms. Instead, Achilles boasts that it will keep a farming man in iron for five years and save him the trouble of buying more supplies (23.832-5). The purpose of the object has been

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[59] Grethlein (2008) 37-8.
[60] *ibid.*
[61] For these other prizes see 23.702-5, 741-51.
[62] Andromache describes the fate of her father and family at the hands of Achilles at 6.416-7.

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changed, and in a surprising way, as Achilles' description of it refers to the world beyond the war, the world of peace, and makes the assumption that the winner of the iron will return to his home in order to make use of it in this way.[63] What was once a symbol of heroic strength and competition is transformed into an economic resource, valued only for its material, monetary worth. This brief reference to a lump of iron therefore demonstrates a significant shift in priorities and concerns among the warriors, and in Achilles especially; although he is aware of his own fate to die at Troy, he assumes that some of his comrades will return home and take up a peaceful life of farming. This is consistent with the Hesiodic picture of the change that occurs after the bronze race; they emphatically do not know how to farm, but there is a suggestion that the heroes make use of agriculture, and working the land is a defining feature of the current age of iron. Although the warriors taking part in the funeral games near the end of the *Iliad* are still in the midst of war, they are able to look ahead to a time after war, and an altogether different kind of existence. The use of Eetion's discus as a prize, with its new role as household fuel, echoes the changing concerns and lives of men in the time after Troy, which will continue after all the heroes have died out.

The examples studied in this chapter show how the *Iliad* presents the time of the heroes by using a complex combination of similarity to and separation from our own time. It is made obvious that the warriors at Troy are several times stronger than we are, and they clearly have a much closer and more personal relationship with the gods. However, the language of the Homeric poems also reminds us that the heroes are mortal just as we are – they bleed as we do, eat grain as we do, and are therefore crucially differentiated from the immortal gods in just the same way as us. One further passage from the *Iliad* serves to add to this picture of difference and continuity, and helps us to see how far the Homeric conception of change over time shares certain patterns with the accounts of the Hesiodic poems.

A passage from the opening of book twelve looks ahead to the time after the war in a way similar to the οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσίν passages, although no explicit comparison is made with the current time of the poet. In this section, the poet briefly departs from his narrow narrative timeframe, and describes how the wall of Achaeans was utterly destroyed after the war, by the combined powers of Zeus, Apollo and Poseidon (12.8-35). Analysis of this

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[63] Richardson (1993) 262-3 calls this "an interesting blend … of motifs suited to the 'heroic age' and the realism of the poet's own (or recent) times". However, the suggestion of what the iron will be used for is in the voice of Achilles, not the poet; the heroes themselves are looking ahead to the time after the war. Achilles' mention of farming is consistent with the mentions of agricultural and pastoral life mentioned in the poem's similes; such activities are a contrasting parallel to the martial lives of the Achaeans, while also establishing, according to Buxton (1994) 79 "a direct and significant bond between the myths and their audience".

proleptic episode has included discussion of how it asserts the commemorative powers of epic poetry, plays with the limits of fictionality, and whether or not it is influenced by Near-Eastern flood myths.[64] What is perhaps most remarkable about the passage, though, is that in this description of the wall's destruction we find the only Homeric reference to the heroes as ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν, "the race of demi-god men" (12.23), which echoes the description of the heroes in the Hesiodic myth of the five races (*Works and Days* 160), and in the closing section of the *Catalogue* as Zeus plans their destruction (fr. 204.100 M-W). This suggests that here the Homeric narrator is presenting the heroes as a different race from us, as the Hesiodic account does. Why, then, does this description of the heroes as half-divine only appear in the Homeric poems in this one instance?

It may be that it is possible to see an allusion in the destruction of the wall to the myth of the heroes' destruction, which, as we have seen, is compatible with the Homeric poems' conception of change, although not explicitly referred to.[65] The description of the heroes as ἡμίθεοι may suggest a connection between this passage and the Hesiodic accounts of the end of their race. In the opening passage of book twelve, however, the demolition of the wall is not described as being concurrent with the end of the heroes. It simply happens at some point after the war, when Troy has been razed to the ground and the Greeks have sailed for home (12.13-6). The text does not encourage us to envisage the destruction of the wall as part of the wholesale elimination of a race, but as an isolated action which was decided upon and enacted by the gods – Apollo and Poseidon diverting several rivers to sweep it away, Zeus bringing heavy rain to speed up the process, and Poseidon finally covering the area with sand once more (17-33). Scodel argues that the Greek epic tradition "borrowed" the theme of destruction from Near-Eastern flood myths, contesting that the war is actually a far less suitable vehicle for mass destruction than a deluge.[66] If the poet and his audience are aware of these flood-myths, the Homeric version seems to be recasting the flood as a less significant event. The war remains the more important marker of the end of the heroes, and the flood turns out to be directed against a single monument. This may be one way in which the poet

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[64] The building and existence of the wall itself has been accused of being an interpolation in the text, by Page (1959) 315-24; his arguments are refuted by Tsagarakis (1969) and West (1969). Porter (2011) argues that the "making and unmaking" of the wall is an illuminating example of how the Homeric narrator tests the limits of fictionality; de Jong (2006) 12-16 argues that the destruction of the wall demonstrates the unparalleled longevity of epic song as a preserver of memory. Scodel (1982) assesses the similarities with flood myths from non-Greek cultures.
[65] Scodel (1982) 36-40.
[66] Scodel (1982) 35,48.

of the *Iliad* asserts the superiority of his own account over those of other traditions, as Finkelberg argues.[67]

Whatever the wall's relation to flood-myths, such an allusion is not the main purpose of the passage. Instead, its emphasis is on the total erasing of the wall from the earth, so that it will be completely undetectable – as if it had never existed in the first place. The main purpose of the passage is therefore to mark a clear separation between the time of the war and our own time, and demonstrate that while this wall was an important part of the war, no physical remnants of it are to be found now. This purpose makes it possible to find an allusion to the myth of the heroes' destruction, but not necessary. The clear message of the wall's destruction is that the heroes are separated from us by a vast swathe of time and events unknown to us. This is why the heroes are here called ἡμίθεοι: the narrative perspective has changed, and is now looking back on the heroes from a later time.[68] It would be confusing to call them demi-gods in the midst of the main narrative, because all the characters are of the same race, but in this one moment the narrator takes a longer view, and sees the heroes from the perspective of the following age. They are therefore distinguished from people of the current time by their divine heritage and close relationship with the gods, both of which are implied by the label ἡμίθεοι. This does not mean the narrator is consciously alluding to the Hesiodic instances of the same term, only that he is taking a similar macrocosmic perspective. Furthermore, the destruction of the wall asserts the ultimate supremacy of the gods, inaugurating the present age of men who are unable to accomplish the great feats of the heroes.

Despite this strong sense of separation, the passage simultaneously manages to suggest an important form of continuity between the heroes and ourselves, that we inhabit the same earth. The destruction of the wall is achieved through recognisable elements of our natural environment: rivers, rains, floods, and tidal waves. This violent weather is reminiscent of the *Catalogue*'s description of the first winter, which inaugurated the current age of men (fr. 204.125-7). Again, this is not sufficient evidence to posit a direct connection between the two accounts, but they do seem to share the same idea that these natural elements and their destructive power are a marker of difference between the previous and current ages. The destruction of the wall, even as it marks a difference between the two ages, therefore suggests continuity by using the natural elements as a symbol of our own time. The implication of the

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[67] Finkelberg (2004).
[68] This point is made by Hainsworth (1993) 320.

episode is that, if the gods had not destroyed it, the wall would still be there, and we would be able to see it.[69] The wall, and the battles fought over it, are separated from us by innumerable years, but are connected to us by the fact that they happened in our own world. In the Hesiodic myth of the races, the world of the heroes is described in terms similar to our own: they have cities and agriculture, things which are missing from the accounts of the previous three races.[70] It is therefore possible to imagine the heroes inhabiting the same physical spaces as we now do, despite the huge difference in time. Later, Attic tragedians would use a similar technique by placing the mythological events of their plays in the very real settings of Athens, Corinth or Thebes. If the heroes had lived in some other world, separate from our own, there would be no need for the Homeric narrator to explain why the Achaean wall is no longer standing. A similar explanation can be posited for the curious punishment of the Phaeacian people in the *Odyssey*, whose ship is transformed into a great rock upon their return to harbour after depositing Odysseus back on Ithaca.[71] Their punishment, which will prevent them from ever again offering help to outsiders, emphasises their separation from the current age of men, while at the same time the transformation of their ship into a rock encourages the identification of this event with real locations.[72]

The destruction of the wall, like the ship of the Phaeacians, asserts the geographical continuity between the heroes and ourselves at the same time as it emphasises huge temporal separation. In this way the passage reflects the Homeric poems' presentation of the heroes as both similar to and different from us, and echoes the Hesiodic patterns of change over time. The discussions of this chapter have so far explored how the Homeric poems as a whole, and particular smaller sections of them, reflect similar patterns of change as we can identify in the traditional timeline of cosmic history. In this, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are joined by the *Homeric Hymns* and the poems of the Epic Cycle which share certain features of their style and narrative with both the Hesiodic and the Homeric poems. As a result, we can see that the traditional narrative of history creates links which stretch across the whole body of hexameter epic. Whereas the Homeric poems, the *Hymns*, and the Cycle all take a much narrower perspective than the Hesiodic poems, they incorporate this narrative into individual episodes and even phrases.

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[69] This is the explanation given by the scholiast (Sch. *Il* (T) 12.9); Hainsworth (1993) 317 calls the passage "a naive device to explain why no Achaean wall, or its ruins, stood in the poet's own day."
[70] See chapter 1, above.
[71] See Scodel (1982) 35, 48.
[72] See Rubens and Taplin (1989) 49-51 for the identification of the ship with a particular rock off the coast of Corfu.

In the remainder of this chapter I make a case study of how these different patterns and types of change may be reflected in the passing of a single generation between father and son. My aim is to ascertain how relevant these patterns of change really are to the specific events and interactions of the Homeric poems, by examining the similarities and differences between Diomedes and Tydeus as portrayed in the *Iliad* and in remaining fragments of the Cyclic *Thebaid*. Whereas in part II of this thesis my focus is on characterisation, this first case study is more straightforward in its aims and methodology, and will lay the foundations for the more complex literary character studies which follow. The three patterns of change which have been identified by this thesis – physical weakening, distancing from the gods, social strengthening – form the basis of this comparison between father and son.

We have already seen that the *Iliad* conceives of the heroes as physically stronger and mightier than the current age of men, and the speeches of Nestor and Odysseus show that this process had been going on even before their time; previous ages are inherently stronger than later ones. A clear indication that this applies to individual generations emerges from consideration of Tydeus and Diomedes, and the repeated allusions to the superior (if problematic) strength of the father. While these allusions emphasise that the strength of the previous generation is something to be admired and emulated, they also seem to be tempered by awareness that decline over time is not linear, and is complicated by the other traditional patterns of change, namely a greater social awareness. Three times in the *Iliad*, a particular episode in Tydeus' battle career is referred to, and told at varying length, by three different characters: his embassy to, and subsequent ambush by, the Cadmaeans at Thebes.

Agamemnon is the first to mention the story of Tydeus and the Cadmaeans, in his Epipolesis of book four.[73] When he comes to Diomedes and Sthenelus, he uses the story to rebuke them, comparing them unfavourably with their fathers' generation (4.370-400).[74] He tells how Tydeus went to the people of Mycenae and asked for help in the campaign against Thebes, which was refused. He was then sent on a lone mission to the city of Thebes, with a message for the Cadmaeans; he challenged them to athletic contests and defeated them all. On his return journey he was ambushed by fifty Cadmaeans (presumably smarting from their athletic defeats) and killed all but one of them. All of this was done with the help of Athene

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[73] See Griffin (1980) 70-72 for an examination of how this section characterizes Agamemnon as a fundamentally flawed leader. See Taplin (1990) for an even less sympathetic reading of his leadership and character.

[74] Alden (2000) 116-119 identifies this as a *neikos* speech; she points out that Agamemnon sees Tydeus as an ideal figure for such anecdotes, because no-one at Troy ever knew him personally, so there is "no danger of being reminded of inconvenient or contradictory material by someone familiar with the whole story". He is still open to challenge from Sthenelus, however, as we see below (79-80).

(385-98). The simple comparison Agamemnon makes between father and son is summed up at the end of his speech: (τοῖος ἔην Τυδεὺς Αἰτώλιος· ἀλλὰ τὸν υἱὸν / γείνατο εἷο χέρεια μάχῃ, ἀγορῇ δέ τ᾽ ἀμείνω 399-400, "Such as this was Tydeus of Aetolia; but he had a son worse than him in war, although better in assembly"). The concession that Diomedes is better than his father in assembly provides an impression of balance in this final line, but does nothing to lessen Agamemnon's rebuke, as Diomedes' strength in words will not help him as he prepares to advance in battle.[75] It is also a clever way to ensure that Diomedes cannot refute Agamemnon's point. Diomedes could make a verbal defence of himself, but that would only prove Agamemnon right.[76] He must prove himself by his actions, which is why he remains silent while Sthenelus answers back (404-9).[77]

The story as told by Agamemnon depicts Tydeus as a lone fighter rather than as a dutiful member of a military company. The nature of his mission is not specified, so we cannot tell the extent to which he was obeying the orders given to him; but the unspecified contests in which he defeated the Cadmaeans cannot have contributed much to the overall (and eventually failed) campaign. His success in killing forty-nine of his ambushers is impressive, and marks him out as a ruthless and formidable warrior. If we are to see Agamemnon's version of Tydeus as a fearsome fighter, who acts alone and on his own instincts, and has the constant help of a goddess, on the surface it is not difficult to see similarities with the Homeric Achilles. It may be that Agamemnon hopes Diomedes will be spurred on to behave like his father, and in that way replace the lost Achilles as pre-eminent fighter. However, it is Achilles' assertion of his independence from the rest of the group that has caused the very problems currently faced by Agamemnon, so if he does have such hopes for Diomedes it shows a stunning lack of self-awareness.[78] The theme of Tydeus as "alone among many" will be noticeable in all three uses of the Cadmaeans story, and I consider below how this is at odds with the kind of warrior who is suited to battle in the *Iliad*.

The problem with using stories from the past in this way is that they are open to challenge from a different perspective, as is demonstrated by Sthenelus' reply to Agamemnon. He accuses Agamemnon of lying (μὴ ψεύδε᾽ 404) and boldly claims that he

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[75] That Diomedes surpasses his father in speech is another marker of the difference between generations, discussed below in this chapter.

[76] Lentini (2006) 42; Nagy (1979) 161-4.

[77] Martin (1989) 71-2 suggested that Diomedes may be using his silence as an assertion of superiority over Agamemnon – he does not even warrant a reply.

[78] As Christensen and Barker (2011) 13 put it, the details of Tydeus' actions "sound out of place in a tale which will articulate the disastrous results of its protagonist's assertion of his individuality." If Agamemnon is consciously encouraging Diomedes to behave in a way which will replace the lost Achilles, it is more evidence of his ineptitude and lack of self-awareness as leader.

and Diomedes are better, not worse, than their fathers. This interjection acts as a challenge to a linear understanding of straightforward decline since the time of their fathers. In his retaliatory speech, Sthenelus presents evidence to mitigate and qualify this conception. He proves the superiority of his own generation by comparing the results of the two missions – they succeeded in taking Thebes, whereas their fathers had failed and died in consequence of their "folly" or "mindlessness" (ἀτασθαλίῃσιν 409).[79] We are reminded that Agamemnon's version only told part of the story – while Tydeus was a terrifying warrior, his army as a whole was not an effective force. Sthenelus' reply complicates the idea of sons being weaker than their fathers by adding that the sons are nevertheless more successful, and less prone to "mindlessness". This particular quality may remind us of the Hesiodic silver race, whose description as νήπιος (*Works and Days* 131) and ἀφραδίης (134) have similar associations and emphasise that the advantages of these previous ages are balanced by certain disadvantages.

The second use of the story of Tydeus and the Cadmaeans comes in Diomedes' *aristeia* of book five, when Athene alludes to the story in her own rebuke to Diomedes as he pauses from battle with a wound (5.800-8).[80] Athene's account differs in perspective from Agamemnon's as she was personally involved in the events she describes, and can therefore offer slightly more detail, although her account is more condensed. A striking difference in Athene's version is Tydeus' disobedience – Athene had forbidden him from fighting with the Cadmaeans (802-3), but he did anyway. This is not, however, presented as a negative attribute. Instead, Athene uses it as evidence that he had a "stronger heart" (θυμὸν ἔχων ὃν καρτερόν 806) and in the end she helped him in his victory (if we accept line 808, omitted by Aristarchus, τοίη οἱ ἐγὼν ἐπιτάρροθος ἦα).[81] There were hints in Agamemnon's story that Tydeus was a ruthless character and perhaps acted on his own initiative, and this impression is confirmed by Athene's version. Tydeus' belligerence is beginning to seem a more defining characteristic than his physical strength. However, in contrast to Agamemnon's harsh rebuke, in which he tried (and, perhaps, failed, after Sthenelus' reply) to emphasise the

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[79] The accusation of mindlessness is only made once elsewhere in the *Iliad* – by Hector about himself at 22.106; but it is common in the *Odyssey*, first used to refer to the folly of Odysseus' companions (1.7) and then especially to the Suitors – see de Jong (2001) 12.

[80] The focus of Athene's version of the story is her support for Tydeus; Alden (2000) 112-152 argues that the combined allusions to Tydeus throughout the poem present a debate on the merits of divine patronage, with Agamemnon and Athene speaking for the positive, and Sthenelos and Glaucus for the negative.

[81] Aristarchus (sch. 5.808 Arn/A) rejects this line because it is seemingly inconsistent with Athene's previous instructions to Tydeus; this is supported by Apthorp (2000), who feels so strongly about the inauthenticity of line 808 that he calls it a "gatecrasher at Homer's banquet" (9). However, this, as Kirk (1990) 143 puts it "fails to recognise the complexity of [Athene's] argument"; that she stood by Tydeus even when he disobeyed her.

difference between father and son, Athene uses the same story to stress a generational continuity between father and son. Her constant presence by the side of both warriors is a striking similarity between the two; the gods can still be involved in the lives of men, but we will see below that the extent of that involvement will change over time.

The third allusion to the Cadmaeans episode comes in the Doloneia of book ten, when Diomedes offers a prayer to Athene to help him in his nocturnal mission to the enemy camp. Rather than praying for help by reminding Athene of the help she has offered himself in the past, as Odysseus has just done (10.278-82), Diomedes reminds her of his father's embassy to the Cadmaeans (284-90).[82] Diomedes' version is the briefest of the three versions of the story, but we can be certain that he refers to the same incident by the details he gives: that Tydeus left the rest of the troops by the banks of the Asopus (10.287; as at 4.383); and that Tydeus was sent as a messenger to Thebes (10.286; as at 5.804 and 4.384). The ambush, not directly referred to by Athene, but called a "close ambush" (πυκινὸν λόχον 4.392) by Agamemnon, Diomedes alludes to as "grim deeds" (μέρμερα ἔργα 10.289). In Diomedes' version, there is no hint of Tydeus' disobedience as mentioned in Athene's version. This is partly because he does not mention the athletic contests that were the initial manifestation of his disobedience, but also because it would not serve his argument to make any reference to his father's rebellion. Diomedes is reminding the goddess of the strong affinity she shared with his father, and any hint of disharmony would not strengthen his associated appeal for help. For this reason, Diomedes' version of Tydeus' deeds gives Athene a greater active role than the other versions do. Not only does Athene follow with Tydeus (ἕσπεο 285) – which could just indicate the goddess' observation rather than positive endorsement – but the killing of his ambushers is achieved σὺν σοί (290). This suggests closer involvement than her description as ἐπιτάρροθος at 5.808 and ἐπίρροθος at 4.390.[83]

The theme of ambush, which Dué and Ebbott broaden to include various nocturnal activities of cattle-raiding and spying missions,[84] seems to suggest a thematic link between the characters of Diomedes and Tydeus, which may be indicative of their differences as well as their familial similarities. One important facet of Dué and Ebbott's argument is that ambush (λοχός) is a highly regarded form of warfare, and not an underhand or cowardly

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[82] Muellner (1976) 27-8 demonstrates that the form used by Odysseus is the typical one for prayer; Diomedes' is an anomaly.
[83] Elbourne (2011) has demonstrated that a likely etymology for these two words is connected to the root form *ῥόθος, meaning chariot; these words therefore refer to a helper or attendant, sometimes with the specific meaning of being on a warrior's chariot with him. This meaning would give the word "a particular, almost punning, appropriateness" (47) in its use at 5.828.
[84] Dué and Ebbott (2010) 80-4.

tactic; in the *Iliad* it is where the courage of men is most clearly displayed (ἔνθα μάλιστ᾽ ἀρετὴ διαείδεται ἀνδρῶν 13.277), and all the best Homeric warriors, including Diomedes, Achilles and Odysseus, are adept in ambush as well as in open battle.[85] Diomedes seems to have been particularly associated with ambush in some parts of the Epic Cycle as well. A testimonium to the *Cypria* tells us that in this poem Diomedes killed Palamedes while fishing;[86] in the *Little Iliad* he apparently ambushed and captured Helenus;[87] and his stealing of the Palladion in the same poem exhibits the theme as well.[88] In all these deeds, he was accompanied by Odysseus, and the latter's strength in ambush is clear from his killing of the suitors at the end of the *Odyssey*, which makes use of many features of the theme.[89]

Tydeus' successful slaughter of forty-nine of his fifty ambushers is the clearest example of the ambush theme, and has similarities with Glaucus' story of Bellerophon (6.187-90). However, the preceding events of the episode can also be regarded as a variation on the ambush theme. In challenging and defeating all his Cadmaean hosts in athletic contests, Tydeus in effect ambushes them on their home ground, albeit in a non-violent manner. Despite this shared theme between father and son, a chief difference between the two of them is the nature of their use of ambush. In the case of Tydeus, the figurative ambush in the athletic contests was not planned – he had been sent merely as a messenger (we can infer, a peaceful messenger), and even Athene had instructed him to be at peace with his hosts. Tydeus' success in the contests therefore marks him out as a renegade. His ambush by fifty Cadmaeans on his return home may have been prompted by their humiliating defeat in those unplanned contests, and as such was brought upon Tydeus by his own actions. His defeat of the forty-nine is, again, not the successful execution of orders from above, but a desperate and ruthless struggle for his own life. In contrast, the mission of Diomedes and Odysseus is preceded by a time of planning and preparation, where the Greeks meet in assembly (βουλή) to discuss the strategy of sending a volunteer to the enemy camp.[90] Diomedes puts himself forward for the task, and takes the precautionary step of suggesting that Odysseus accompany him, as success is more likely when two work together (10.194-247). Thus, the use of the ambush theme in Tydeus' case illustrates his independence, disobedience and ruthlessness, whereas the use of the same theme in the Doloneia demonstrates Diomedes' willingness to obey orders, ability to cooperate with his comrades,

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[85] Dué and Ebbott (2010) 34-49.
[86] *Cypria* 27 Davies.
[87] *Little Iliad* Proclus, *Argumentum* 2.
[88] *Little Iliad* Proclus, *Argumentum 4.*
[89] Dué and Ebbott (2010) 34-49; Edwards (1985).
[90] Dué and Ebbott (2010) 71-3 discuss the features of planning for an ambush.

and mindfulness of danger. These qualities in which Diomedes differs from his father may help to explain why the first expedition to Thebes was a failure, while the campaign of the Epigoni, and of the Greeks against Troy, are successful. This single example of how father and son make use of ambush tactics can thus be seen as an illustration of the social progress which has occurred in the intervening generation.

The theme of ambush, and the emphasis on Tydeus as being "alone among many", is an important marker of difference between the battle environment of the *Iliad* and of the Theban story. Some recent interpretations of the politics of the *Iliad* draw attention to the nature of the Greek troops as a coalition of various forces, and emphasise that the poem as a whole has "a vivid interest in matters of communal life".[91] While Agamemnon is sometimes cast as pre-eminent, he is not the single king or leader of all the troops.[92] This emphasis on the group is reflected in the fearful connotations held by being "alone" (μοῦνος) in the poem, which denotes a state of danger and vulnerability in battle, expressed when Diomedes chooses Odysseus to accompany him in the Doloneia.[93] If we accept that the *Iliad* places value on a group mentality, we can contrast that with the individualistic mentality of Tydeus in the story of the Cadmaeans. This most famous story of his exploits suggests that his talents lay in fighting by himself, and not as part of a group. In this way, he would be unsuited to battle in the *Iliad*, where the example of Achilles illustrates the great dangers of a warrior isolating himself from the rest of the group. As in many other ways, Achilles can be seen as the exception that proves the rule, as his isolation from the group demonstrates the crucial importance of communality in the troops. Even though the story of Tydeus and the Cadmaeans is used to exhort Diomedes to greatness, it would in fact be inappropriate for him to behave like his father. Behaviour that was laudable in the previous generation is now dangerous.

So far it is evident that the figures of Tydeus and Diomedes do seem to reflect some of the traditional patterns of change through history: the previous generation is stronger, but has less social cohesion. One of the most famous stories about Tydeus from the *Thebaid*, telling of his death, seems to reflect the other important pattern of change: distancing from the gods. F5 of the *Thebaid*, in Davies' edition of the Epic Cycle fragments (preserved in the D scholia to 5.126), tells the story:

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[91] Haubold (2000) 98; see also Hammer (2002), Taplin (1992) 57-8.
[92] Taplin (1990).
[93] For the connotations of *mounos* and its distinctness from *oios*, see Goldhill (2010); on the significance of the group mentality in the *Iliad*, see Barker and Christensen (2011) 15-6.

Τυδεὺς ὁ Οἰνέως ἐν τῶι Θηβαϊκῶι πολέμωι ὑπὸ Μελανίππου τοῦ Ἀστακοῦ ἐτρώθη· Ἀμφιάρεως δὲ κτείνας τὸν Μελάνιππον τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐκόμισε [Τυδεῖ] καὶ ἀνοίξας αὐτὴν ὁ Τυδεὺς τὸν ἐγκέφαλον ἐρρόφει ἀπὸ θυμοῦ. Ἀθηνᾶ δέ, κομίζουσα Τυδεῖ ἀθανασίαν ἰδοῦσα τὸ μίασμα ἀπεστράφη αὐτόν. Τυδεὺς δὲ γνοὺς ἐδεήθη τῆς θεοῦ ἵνα κἂν τῶι παιδὶ αὐτοῦ παράσχηι τὴν ἀθανασίαν. ἡ ἱστορία παρὰ τοῖς Κυκλικοῖς.

According to this fragment, Tydeus was wounded in battle by Melanippus, who was then killed by Amphiaraus. The latter then carried Melanippus' head to the dying Tydeus, who gnawed at the brain to soothe his spirit. Seeing this, Athene retracted the immortality she would have offered Tydeus; and having realised his mistake, Tydeus requested of the goddess that she bestow immortality on his son Diomedes instead. The A and bT scholia to 5.126[94] relate the story in almost identical terms, but with the added detail that Tydeus had been "violently annoyed" (σφόδρα ἀγανακτῆσαι 76-7) by Melanippus, providing a motive for his desecration of the latter's corpse, although no further explanation of the offence is given. The episode is attested, with variations, in several other written sources including a scholion to Pindar, Statius, and, later, Libanius. It also seems to have been depicted on red-figure vases as early as the fifth century.[95] The D scholia, through which the above fragment was preserved, have diverse origins and come from a tradition which represents, as Dickey points out, the "oldest surviving stratum of Homeric scholarship".[96] The A and bT scholia have different origins, but are predominantly exegetical in character.[97] The correspondence between the two traditions assures us that the Melanippus episode was known to some of the *Iliad*'s earliest critical readers, and was perhaps the most famous episode from stories about Tydeus. In both scholia, the association is prompted by Athene's first spoken intervention to encourage Diomedes; she has mentioned Tydeus by name but given no reference to any specific episode when she had offered him help. The scholiasts perhaps inserted the Melanippus story here as it is the first time Athene mentions Tydeus in her help to Diomedes, and the story reveals something of the relationship between the goddess, the mortal and his problematic father. However, it thus invites us to question Athene's use of Tydeus as a positive precedent, as it reveals a side of his character that Diomedes should not be encouraged to emulate.

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[94] Erbse (1971 v2) 22.
[95] Beazley (1947) makes a thorough study of the scene on two red-figure kraters from the mid-late 5th century BC, especially focusing on the personification of Immortality (*Athanasia*) which seems to have been invented by the vase-painters rather than the poets. He also provides a summary of when the episode is mentioned by the listed writers.
[96] Dickey (2007) 20.
[97] *ibid.*

There are two elements to this story about Tydeus which are particularly striking: his treatment of his enemy's body, and Athene's intention to grant him immortality. Both of these elements are out of kilter with the *Iliad*, and would be out of place if they were narrated as part of the fighting at Troy. If we consider why this story seems so different from what we would expect in the *Iliad*, we will gain a clearer picture of specifically how Tydeus was different from his son Diomedes. The first issue is Tydeus' desecration of Melannipus' corpse. This kind of visceral hatred of an enemy is not surprising, as there are three occasions in the *Iliad* when characters express a desire to eat an opponent's flesh.[98] The most significant of these is a wish uttered by Achilles, in which he expresses a desire to eat Hector's flesh, and wishes that he could bring himself to do the deed, driven by his anger and his spirit (αἴ γάρ πως αὐτόν με μένος καὶ θυμὸς ἀνείη / ὤμ' ἀποταμνόμενον κρέα ἔδμεναι 22.346-7). By wishing that his anger and spirit would allow him to do such a thing, Achilles implies that he is in fact incapable of committing the deed. This is where the imagery of the *Iliad* differs from our fragment of the *Thebaid*, in which Tydeus actually does gnaw on the brain of Melannipus. This suggests a difference of innate or instinctive morality from Achilles, who does not refrain from the act for fear of retribution or shame, but because his own inner self will not allow it. In contrast, Tydeus' θυμός does not prevent him from doing as he wishes, and in this he is unique; such behaviour is not associated with any other figure from the Epic Cycle. That the only example of actual flesh-eating occurs in an earlier generation suggests that this is the cause of the difference. The later generation is less savage and more humane.

The second element of the *Thebaid* story that marks it out as different from the *Iliad* is Athene's offer of immortality to Tydeus. This is suggestive of a different relationship between gods and mortals from the one present in the *Iliad*, where such an offer is unthinkable. The choice of Achilles, between a long life of obscurity or a short life that will win him fame (9.411-6), would be nonsensical if he had the third option of immortality.[99] When Zeus laments over the death of Sarpedon the question of immortality is not even mooted (16.431-59). If it is not in the power of the father of gods and men to grant eternal life to one of his favourites, such an offer must be off-limits to all. Although in the *Thebaid* fragment Athene does not in fact bestow immortality on Tydeus, it is clear that her intention is genuine – she had been "carrying immortality to Tydeus" (Ἀθηνᾶ δέ, κομίζουσα Τυδεῖ

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[98] At 4.35-6, Zeus accuses Hera of having this desire of the Trojans; at 24.212-3 Hecuba expresses the same of Achilles.

[99] Achilles' mortality, in contrast with the divinity of his mother, is a necessary part of the arguments of Slatkin (1991).

ἀθανασίαν Davies F5.3) and only turns away when she witnesses his gruesome actions. Her intentions are in some way made clear enough that Tydeus realises his error, and for that reason asks the goddess to give his son immortality instead. This raises another question, of whether Diomedes was granted that immortality in the Epic Cycle or not. In some later poetry, he is immortal,[100] but in the Homeric poems he is emphatically mortal, as all men are. His mortality is especially stressed in an episode where he comes closest to transcending his mortal limits – his *aristeia* in book five.

Early on in book five, immediately after he has been struck with Pandarus' arrow (5.95-100), Diomedes prays to Athene to give him strength. He asks for this support in order to kill Pandarus in revenge (118-20), so his violent intentions are clear; this is a suitable time for him to emulate his father. Athene replies by referring to the violent strength she had supplied to Tydeus, and now supplies to Diomedes: "For in your chest I have put the unflinching strength of your father, such as Tydeus, the horseman and shield-bearer had" (ἐν γάρ τοι στήθεσσι μένος πατρώιον ἧκα / ἄτρομον, οἷον ἔχεσκε σακέσπαλος ἱππότα Τυδεύς 125-6). This strength (μένος), along with bravery (θάρσος), has already been implanted in Diomedes by the goddess at the opening of the book (5.1-3), but that had involved no personal contact or encouragement from the goddess. Now, after he has been wounded, Athene goes further and gives him another gift, which is unique in the poem. To aid Diomedes in battle, she removes "the mist from your eyes that was over them before, so that you may well discern god and man" (ἀχλὺν δ᾽ αὖ τοι ἀπ᾽ ὀφθαλμῶν ἕλον, ἣ πρὶν ἐπῆεν, / ὄφρ᾽ εὖ γιγνώσκῃς ἠμὲν θεὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα 127-8).

A divine mist, which obscures or conceals, is used several times in the poem to help or hinder, but Diomedes is unique in having the mist lifted for him to give him special discernment. Fenik even identifies the mist as a typical feature of battle scenes,[101] but its usual purpose is to be temporarily protective, such as when a mist prevents the bodies of Sarpedon and Patroclus from being harmed by the enemy at 16.567 and 17.268-70 respectively. Such a special gift may remind us of Athene's offer of immortality to Tydeus, and seem to give Diomedes an elevated status. However, the purpose of her gift this time is for Diomedes to recognise the boundary between gods and men and not try to cross it – she tells him clearly that if he sees an immortal in battle he should not fight them (129-31). The exception to this rule is Aphrodite, a caveat which is perhaps amusing in its suggestion of the

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[100] Ibycus fr.294 P; Pindar *Nemean* 10.7.
[101] Fenik (1968) 22.

rancour between the two goddesses.[102]   The lifting of the mist seems to simultaneously emphasise the continuity between father and son, as both are supported and offered supernatural gifts by Athene, but also demonstrate the difference between their two generations. While Tydeus had the opportunity to become immortal, the greatest gift Athene can give Diomedes is to make him hyper-aware of his mortality.

After Athene's intervention Diomedes resumes fighting. As he attacks Aeneas with a near-fatal blow, the phrase "such as men are now", studied above, indicates that he is at the peak of his strength, and emphasises that he is far superior to generations born after him. After Aphrodite has rescued her son, Diomedes recognises her and gives chase, following the instructions given him by Athene (300-3). When he wounds her on the wrist, her blood is called "ichor", the bloodless blood of the immortals (ῥέε δ᾽ ἄμβροτον αἷμα θεοῖο, / ἰχώρ 339-40). This makes clear the distinction between gods and mortals, even at a moment when a goddess is the weaker of the two. This book is the only time in the poem when immortal blood is drawn, as it is once more when Ares is wounded, and on both occasions Diomedes inflicts the injury. When Aphrodite goes to her mother Dione, the latter comforts her with stories of other immortals who have been harmed by violent men: Ares, Hera and Hades (385-402). Dione assures her that men are punished if they harm the gods; they do not live long enough to return home and enjoy their children (407-9). She curses Diomedes by wishing for the day when his wife will mourn him in his home (410-5). However, this is not to be fulfilled, as there are no stories of a violent or early death for Diomedes, which would be inconsistent with his constant support from Athene.[103] This Olympian scene demonstrates that Aphrodite's wounding is not seen by the other gods to be a serious crime – Athene openly mocks her to Zeus, who urges Aphrodite to keep to her realm of love and marriage and not partake in battle with Ares and Athene (419-30). Diomedes has engaged in battle with an immortal, but will not receive any punishment. Rather than challenging the gods, he has acted specifically in accordance with their wishes.

After this, however, Diomedes returns to the battlefield and acts in way which goes beyond the instructions he had received from Athene. Perhaps spurred on by his success in wounding Aphrodite, he continues his assault on Aeneas, even though the Trojan is now being protected by Apollo, and Diomedes is fully aware of the identity of the god (γιγνώσκων ὅ οἱ αὐτὸς ὑπείρεχε χεῖρας Ἀπόλλων 433). His three assaults on Apollo, and the fourth which

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[102] Aphrodite's unsuitability to interfere in the battle is emphasised by Zeus when she complains to him of her wound (5.426-30).
[103] Kirk (1990) 103.

is repulsed by the god (436-8), use the same phrasing as later scenes involving Patroclus (16.702-6 and 16.784-6) and Achilles (20.445-9). All of these passages use the pattern of τρίς … τρίς … τὸ τέταρτον ("three times … three times … the fourth time") as well as a description of the warrior in question as δαίμονι ἶσος, "like a god".[104] In each case, it is the fact that the hero is behaving more like a god than a human that causes him to be driven back, and ordered to respect the boundary between mortals and immortals. Apollo explains this to Diomedes at 5.440-2: "Think, son of Tydeus, and withdraw; do not wish to think as the gods do, since in no way alike are the immortal gods and the men who walk on the earth" (φράζεο· Τυδεΐδη, καὶ χάζεο, μηδὲ θεοῖσιν / ἶσ' ἔθελε φρονέειν, ἐπεὶ οὔ ποτε φῦλον ὁμοῖον / ἀθανάτων τε θεῶν χαμαὶ ἐρχομένων τ' ἀνθρώπων). Apollo will give a similar warning to Patroclus at 16.707-9, and like Diomedes Patroclus will respond by retreating some way backwards.[105] Patroclus will behave in the same way again later in the same book, but this time he will be punished with death, as Apollo knocks his armour and his helmet from him (16.786-804). This provides a clear illustration of how dangerous it is to cross the boundary between gods and mortals in battle, and suggests that Diomedes could have been subject to the same punishment if he had behaved in the same way again. Here, the mist that has been lifted from Diomedes' eyes proves to be vitally important. He will be able to recognise the gods if he finds himself in the same situation, whereas Patroclus does not see Apollo when he advances towards him, as he is shrouded in thick mist (789-90). The fact that Diomedes recognises the gods may mean that his decision to attack Apollo is more reprehensible, but it also provides him the opportunity of avoiding any conflict with a god as he goes on fighting. In book five, Apollo is so alarmed by Diomedes' actions that he sends Ares to join the battle and put an end to his rampage – "who would now fight even against father Zeus" (ὃς νῦν γε καὶ ἂν Διὶ πατρὶ μάχοιτο 5.457). Diomedes' behaviour in this section has pushed the boundary of his mortality without quite transgressing it. The reaction of the gods, and Apollo's warning to him, show why this kind of behaviour is dangerous. Apollo's emphasis on the distance between gods and men reminds us that this distance will further increase over future generations. Furthermore, his warning that Diomedes would fight "even with father Zeus" puts us in mind of the conflicts of the divine succession myth, and explains why such behaviour cannot be tolerated; it threatens the stability of the Olympian hierarchy.[106]

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[104] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 126-8.
[105] At 5.443 Diomedes retreats a small distance backwards, while at 16.710 Patroclus retreats a long way; Zenodotus, however, suggested that 16.710 should read τυτθόν rather than πολλόν, and therefore match the line in book five.
[106] See chapter 1 of this thesis.

Athene returns to Diomedes after the Greeks have been considerably weakened, and Diomedes is standing by his chariot, nursing his arrow-wound. She rebukes him for his inactivity with allusion to the story of Tydeus with the Cadmaeans, discussed above. In reply, Diomedes explains that he had been carefully following Athene's orders, and did not wish to advance against the Trojans after recognising that Ares was fighting with them (816-24). This is entirely truthful: earlier in the battle Diomedes had given the order to retreat from the Trojans and told his men, "do not be eager to fight against the gods" (μηδὲ θεοῖς μενεαινέμεν ἶφι μάχεσθαι 606). Diomedes has acted in accordance with his orders, and in response to his warning from Apollo, but Athene now dismisses such caution, and tells him that he need not fear any god, "such a helper am I to you" (τοίη τοι ἐγὼν ἐπιτάρροθός εἰμι 828). This is almost identical to how she had described her support of Tydeus just twenty lines earlier (τοίη οἱ ἐγὼν ἐπιτάρροθος ἦα 808), and so a clear correspondence is made between the two relationships. It almost seems at this point as if Athene is surprised by Diomedes' obedience, and had expected him to behave as we can imagine his father would have done – taking on any opponent, god or mortal, and fighting ruthlessly against them.

In the scene that follows, Athene joins Diomedes on his chariot, pushing Sthenelus aside (835-8), and together they attack Ares, still active on the Trojan side. Although it is Diomedes who casts the spear against the god, Athene bears it on and thrusts it into his abdomen (855-7). On the surface this appears to be Diomedes' most ruthless act, and the point at which he most resembles his violent father. However, like his special gift of discernment, his wounding of Ares in fact displays the differences between the father and son. In Athene's version of the Cadmaeans story in lines 800-8, Tydeus' disobedience and independence had been emphasised, but here Diomedes acts only on the orders of, and with the active involvement of, Athene. Because of this, Diomedes receives no retribution for wounding Ares. When the god complains to his father, Zeus dismisses him, saying he hates him more than any other god (889).

Diomedes' *aristeia* is the most violent and bloody illustration of his prowess in war, but it is also a testament to his obedience to the gods and his awareness of the difference between gods and men. The gift from Athene, although it may at first remind us of her offer of immortality to Tydeus, in fact has the opposite effect: a heightened awareness of his own mortality. His skirmishes with the gods are not a sign that he wishes to surpass his mortal status, as he attacks Aphrodite and Ares only with the permission and help of Athene. He does begin to push the boundary when he attacks Apollo in the "triple attempt" scene, but after Apollo's verbal warning he withdraws, his lesson learnt, and orders his whole company

to retreat when he sees Ares. Even in battle, where Diomedes is encouraged to behave like his father, he still maintains crucial differences from Tydeus which reflect his place in a later generation, when immortality is impossible and the gulf between gods and men is increasing. The constancy of Athene as supporter of both Tydeus and Diomedes in fact illustrates how the gods' relationships with mortals must change over time; she encourages Diomedes as strongly as she encouraged his father, but she does not have the same gifts to offer him. This is a reflection of the wider cosmic change which has been occurring through the generations, which has stopped immortals mating with mortals, will bring the age of the demigods to an end, and which ensures that our own race of iron takes us further than ever from the gods.

This case study has so far shown that the example of Tydeus and Diomedes reflects the patterns of change over time which are traditional to hexameter poetry. There is also evidence that Diomedes himself, as a Homeric character, is aware of his differences from his father. When he meets Glaucus on the battlefield in book six, he emphatically rejects his father's memory and disassociates himself from him. As the two warriors face each other, Diomedes asks Glaucus to identify himself (τίς δὲ σύ ἐσσι … καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων "Who are you … of mortal men?" 6.123). His main concern is to ascertain that Glaucus is mortal rather than divine, so that he can fight him without fear of retribution (128-43). This is a clear sign that Diomedes has learnt from his experiences in the previous book that he should only try to face the gods in battle when he is accompanied by Athene. When Glaucus replies, he already knows Diomedes' identity and calls him "great-hearted son of Tydeus" (Τυδεΐδη μεγάθυμε 145). After his famous simile of the leaves,[107] he gives a detailed account of his lineage, focusing on the deeds of Bellerophon.[108] Diomedes, when he has heard this, lays down his spear (213), and reveals that Bellerophon had known his own grandfather, Oeneus; he therefore calls Glaucus his "dear guest-friend" (ξεῖνος φίλος 224). While identifying himself strongly with his paternal grandfather, he then denies any association with his father, saying that he has no memory of Tydeus (Τυδέα δ᾽ οὐ μέμνημαι 222) as he left for Thebes when he was very young.[109] This mention of Tydeus responds to Glaucus' use of the patronymic in his initial address, but Diomedes could have taken this opportunity to boast of his father's great deeds as he later does in books ten and fourteen. The lack of any such boasting, and indeed his mention of that generation's defeat at Thebes (ὅτ᾽ ἐν Θήβῃσιν ἀπώλετο λαὸς Ἀχαιῶν 223), is striking. The effect is that Glaucus is prevented from

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[107] Graziosi and Haubold (2010) 116-8.
[108] The story of Bellerophon in itself bears some similarities with Tydeus' encounters with the Cadmaeans, as it makes use of the same theme of ambush; see Dué and Ebbott (2010).
[109] Graziosi and Haubold (2010) 15, 37-8.

inquiring about Tydeus, or making any comparison between father and son. However, after other positive references to Tydeus elsewhere in the poem, the audience is prompted to question why Diomedes does not want any such association to be made at this specific moment.

Because of this inconsistency, the T scholiast called lines 222-3 "out of place" (ἄτοποι). However, as Graziosi and Haubold point out, the wider context of these lines makes them highly effective.[110] The point is that Tydeus is a not a good role-model in this particular situation, as he undoubtedly can be in the circumstances of battle or ambush. Diomedes' brief mention of his father's campaign against Thebes emphasises his failure, demonstrating a different use of the past from the allusions which emphasised his prowess and strength in battle. Graziosi and Haubold suggest that "one implication may be that he [Diomedes] needs to adopt a different set of values".[111] The values of guest-friendship and peaceful reconciliation that Diomedes displays here are inconsistent with the picture we have gained of Tydeus from the remaining sources. This makes clear that Diomedes is keenly aware of how he must be different from his father in order to behave appropriately in certain situations. In the case of his meeting with Glaucus, he has skilfully avoided a direct confrontation through the use of diplomacy and clever speech – two qualities which we cannot imagine in Tydeus.

Even before his encounter with Glaucus, Diomedes' way with words has been mentioned by Agamemnon as one way in which he surpasses his father (4.399-400). This is not just a marker of difference between father and son, but is reflective of how their two generations differ in the value they place on a group mentality. For a group to work together effectively in Diomedes' time, social structures are necessary, an example of which is the skilful speech and reasoned debate of the assembly. Early in the poem, the Achaean assemblies demonstrate the importance of the group as a whole; for a man to succeed in this environment, he should be able to address his fellow warriors convincingly. Diomedes does this in books nine and fourteen, and he is applauded by the Achaeans for his efforts.[112] The formal assembly is an embodiment of social organisation, and a symbol of the importance of justice, so Diomedes' skill in this arena associates him with the kind of social progression which separates him from his father. In book fourteen, he speaks up again, and this time he makes use of the precedent of his father to prove that he is worthy to be heard. However, the

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[110] Graziosi and Haubold (2010) 140.
[111] *Ibid.*
[112] The same two-line phrase is used at 7.403-4 and 9.50-1 to describe the positive reaction of the group, and is partly repeated at 9.711.

way he presents Tydeus in this speech is different from the impression we gain of him in the Cadmaeans story. Here, Diomedes demonstrates his skills both in speaking and in manipulating his father's memory to his immediate concerns.

In the assembly in question, Agamemnon has suggested the removal of the Greek ships, and Odysseus has strongly rebuked him for it (14.82-102), when Diomedes speaks up. He opens by urging his audience not to dismiss his words just because he is the youngest of them (μή τι κότῳ ἀγάσησθε ἕκαστος / οὕνεκα δὴ γενεῆφι νεώτατός εἰμι μεθ᾽ ὑμῖν 111-2). He goes on to justify his worth by mention of his noble lineage, using his paternal line as a positive precedent. The depiction of Tydeus that he offers here is quite different from the impression we have gained from previous allusions to him, because it is not based on violence or physical strength. Diomedes calls his grandfather Oeneus "pre-eminent in valour" (ἀρετῇ δ᾽ ἦν ἔξοχος αὐτῶν 118), and Tydeus is said to have "excelled all the Achaeans with his spear" (κέκαστο δὲ πάντας Ἀχαιοὺς / ἐγχείῃ 124-5) but no more detailed story of their deeds is given, as we might expect from previous allusions to Tydeus. His failed campaign to Thebes is mentioned only insofar as he is buried there (114),[113] which also serves as an oblique allusion to the Seven's defeat. These brief allusions to Tydeus' battle career perform neither of the two actions that might be expected: either invoking his great deeds to give inspiration in the current moment as Athene and Agamemnon have done; or doing as Sthenelus did and proving that the present generation are even greater than the previous one.

Diomedes' emphasis is instead on creating a peaceful picture of his father's life. The family of Tydeus is said to come from Pleuron and Calydon, but Tydeus "went wandering to Argos and settled there, for so, I suppose, was Zeus minded and the other gods" (πατὴρ δ᾽ ἐμὸς Ἄργεϊ νάσθη / πλαγχθείς· ὣς γάρ που Ζεὺς ἤθελε καὶ θεοὶ ἄλλοι 119-20).[114] The wealth and abundance enjoyed by Tydeus in his new home results from his marriage to a daughter of Adrastus (121-2) rather than as a reward for his own deeds. His life there is depicted as rather bucolic, surrounded by wheat-fields, orchards and sheep (122-3), and bears no relation to what we have learnt about Tydeus from previous allusions. It is not immediately obvious why Diomedes has chosen to depict his father in this way at this point. Although he is speaking in the diplomatic environment of assembly, he is about to exhort his comrades to

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[113] Barker and Christensen (2011) 33-4.

[114] Such a reference to the will of Zeus can sometimes be read as nothing more than an assurance that something took place, as a synonym for an inevitable fate. However, Janko (1992) 163-4 suggests that here Diomedes conceals the reason for his father's flight from his homeland, which is found in other stories about his life – that Tydeus had killed his uncle and was therefore banished.

war (128-32), so it would not be out of place for him to base his claim to authority on his father's battle career.

However, Diomedes is aiming here not to prove his worth in battle – he has surely demonstrated that for all to see in the preceding books – but to prove his nobility based on his lineage. His thoughts therefore go beyond the sphere of battle to the world of family and marriage. Diomedes, wounded and unable to engage further in battle, has no more use for stories of his father's prowess. At this point in the poem he has to prove that he is useful for more than just killing the enemy, and so it is suitable that he would want to put himself forward as a man with an illustrious heritage who has the nobility to speak and advise. Although it is Athene and Agamemnon who make the most blatant allusions to Tydeus, it seems that Diomedes has a more nuanced approach to his past. He is happy to invoke the name of his father in battle, to inspire him to great deeds, but he is careful to disassociate himself from Tydeus when the situation calls for diplomacy, and present an altogether different picture of his father in the assembly, where his father was not renowned. Even in battle, the exhortations of his elders do not lead him to follow unreservedly the example of the previous generation. Instead, he maintains a cautious obedience and respect for mortal limits that is quite unlike Tydeus. Diomedes' emphasis on a peaceful, agricultural life when he speaks in book fourteen not only looks ahead to a time after the war, but to future generations who will have different lives and priorities, and when the gods are as unknowable as the ambiguous "will of Zeus". Diomedes therefore seems to stand astride two different generations, as he uses the past to validate his present and look ahead to a peaceful future. If he were to be useful only in war, like his father, he would be outdated as a warrior. His strength in assembly, and the value he places on a peaceful peasant lifestyle, show him to be more progressive, and reflect the ways in which the lives and priorities of men change over generations.

The patterns of change through history which we found in the Hesiodic poems may seem distant and remote from the experience of individual characters and narrative moments, but this case study of Diomedes and Tydeus suggests that those patterns can actively shape and inform the way individual figures are presented in the Homeric poems. In part II of this thesis I make use of these traditional patterns of genealogical history and explore the extent to which they can influence our interpretation of certain Homeric characters. The chapters of part I have shown how the different poems of the hexameter corpus, despite their great differences in perspective and narrative scope, are capable of reflecting similar patterns of genealogical history, and consistent ideas about how the lives of gods and men have changed

over time. In the Hesiodic poems, these ideas are explicitly laid out, but their presence is also implicit in the Homeric poems. The example of Diomedes and Tydeus demonstrates that the Homeric poems can incorporate those patterns even on the scale of a single generation; the chapters that follow in part II will take a narrower focus still, and examine how traditional ideas of history can have an impact on the thoughts, feelings and actions of individual characters in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* who significantly mark the beginning and end of the Trojan saga.

Part II: Character

3: Helen

In part I of this thesis we have seen that the hexameter tradition contains a narrative of cosmic history which is shared between different poems, and which is structured by certain repeated patterns of change over the generations. In the Hesiodic poems, this narrative and these patterns are explicitly laid out; in the Homeric poems they are implicit, but are still an important part of the poems' conception of the past and its relationship to the present. The question which will be addressed in part II of this thesis is how this traditional genealogical history can have an effect on our reading of the Homeric poems, and specifically their presentation of particular characters. In this chapter I focus on the character of Helen, who, despite being much-discussed in ancient and modern scholarship, still has further possibilities for interpretation. We have seen in chapter 2 that an allusive relationship with other parts of the hexameter tradition, and its narrative of genealogical history, is an important feature of the Homeric poems, and can even make a difference to our reading of individual scenes and characters. The purpose of this chapter is to form an impression of the Homeric Helen which is informed by her presentation across the hexameter tradition, in order to ascertain the extent to which her characterisation is shaped by the traditional narrative of cosmic history, and her very specific positioning in that timeline. I consider how she is presented in the poems of Hesiod and the Epic Cycle, before moving on to investigate how her characterisation in those poems can help us to understand the particular way she is presented in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Recent studies of the character of Helen in the Homeric poems often focus on her multiplicity, or what Suzuki calls her "radical undecidability".[1] This elusiveness may be a result of the fact that she only appears in a handful of scenes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which in the *Iliad* is at odds with her crucial causal role in the war.[2] Commentators agree that she seems to be emotionally detached from those around her, and even from the war being

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[1] Suzuki (1989) 18. The multiplicity of popular reactions to Helen is implicit in the subtitles to Blondell (2013): "beauty, myth, devastation" and Hughes (2005): "goddess, princess, whore". Worman (1997) defines Helen by her elusive quality, both physical and emotional.

[2] Helen appears in the *Iliad* in books 3, 6 and 24; and in the *Odyssey* in books 4 and 15.

fought for her sake, as demonstrated in the *Iliad* by her appraisal of the Greek troops in the Teichoskopia of book three (3.161-244), her weaving of an image of the ongoing war onto an ornamental robe (3.125-8), and her justification of the suffering of herself and all around her by the fact that it makes them "worthy of song for men to come" (ὡς καὶ ὀπίσσω / ἀνθρώποισι πελώμεθ᾽ ἀοίδιμοι ἐσσομένοισι 6.357-8).[3] Some interpreters are unsure how to react to the blame she places on herself, which seems to be out of proportion with the way other characters regard her – even Priam, distraught after the loss of the best of his sons, never places any responsibility for events on Helen, but she repeatedly and vehemently blames herself.[4] In antiquity, discussion of Helen focused on this problem of her responsibility, which different writers tried to solve in various ways – Stesichorus and Herodotus by removing her from Troy altogether, and Gorgias by the pure power of rhetoric.[5] In this chapter I attempt to explain the elusiveness and multivalence of the Homeric Helen by considering her in the context of the hexameter tradition, as represented by the poems of Hesiod and the Epic Cycle. Her strong connection with the traditional conception of genealogical history may help us to understand the particularities of her presentation in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and demonstrate how the Homeric poet interacts with the wider tradition in order to create such a complex and compelling character.

The poems of the hexameter tradition which contain the clearest accounts of genealogical history are the Hesiodic *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*.[6] Helen does not figure in the *Theogony*, and her only mention in the *Works and Days* comes in the myth of the five races, which I discuss in chapter 1 of this thesis. In the description of the race of the heroes, two great wars are presented as the main instruments of this race's mass death: some died at Thebes, "for the sake of Oedipus' flocks" (μήλων ἕνεκ᾽ Οἰδιπόδαο 163),[7] and some died at Troy, "for the sake of lovely-haired Helen" (Ἑλένης ἕνεκ᾽ ἠυκόμοιο 165). These two great wars are thus dispensed with in just a few lines, and Helen is named as the single

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[3] Helen's detached perspective has been commented upon by Clader (1976) 2-24, Pantelia (2002) and Taplin (1992) 96-103. Suzuki (1989) 42-3 comments upon how this means she seems to take on the same role as the poet. Elmer (2005) 32 argues that Helen's use of poetry has been too narrowly understood, as a reflection of the epic bard's art – her use of poetry is much more diverse than that, and contains more epigrammatic than epic reflections.

[4] See below in this chapter for an assessment of Helen's death-wishes, which express her deep shame and guilt about her actions. Graver (1995) argues that Helen's opinion of herself is reflective of an alternative tradition which does blame her; the *Iliad* is aware of this tradition but does not follow it.

[5] See Austin (1994) on the treatment of Helen in Herodotus and Stesichorus; Blondell (2013) on Gorgias. See also Blondell (2010) on the use of Helen by Archaic lyric poets.

[6] See chapter 1.

[7] See Verdenius (1985) 101. This naming of a specific cause, using ἕνεκα, seems to be epic convention; see Renehan (1980) 347.

unequivocal cause of one of them, serving the same function for the Trojan war as the disputed flocks of Oedipus do for the Theban. This might suggest that she is here being treated as property, and her economic worth is indeed an aspect of her characterisation as a cause of the war.[8] However, in this single mention, Helen is characterised with two conflicting qualities which make her more than simple property. She is beautiful, as shown by her epithet ἠυκόμοιο, but she is also baneful, as she is the cause of the deaths of so many heroes. In this she is similar to the Hesiodic depiction of Pandora, whose beautiful appearance is it odds with her role as a curse on all mankind (πῆμα 82).[9] Marquardt argues that the Hesiodic poems have an inherently ambiguous view of the race of women as a whole,[10] and Helen's conflicting attributes fit with that trend. Although she is mentioned only once in the two poems, we can therefore characterise the Hesiodic Helen as representative of womankind as a whole, alongside the similarly ambivalent Pandora. Helen, like Pandora and all women, is a καλὸν κακόν, a "beautiful evil" (*Theogony* 585).

I argue in chapter 1 that the *Catalogue of Women* should be regarded as part of the same Hesiodic hexameter tradition as the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*. We saw in that chapter that the *Catalogue* can be placed at a very specific point in the timeline of cosmic history, because it describes the very end of the time of the heroes. Helen is relevant to this poem not just as a feature in the heroic genealogies, but also as a crucial component in the plan of Zeus to end the heroes. As part of the line of Tyndareus,[11] Helen features in the genealogies of the first half of this poem, but unfortunately the extant evidence contains several contradictions about her place in the family. F23a (M-W) lists the children of Leda and Tyndareus as three daughters (Timandra, Clytemnestra and Phylonoe) and, after an intervention from Zeus, Polydeuces, Castor and Helen. Those latter two names are reconstructions;[12] even if we are certain that Helen was named here, it is not clear what that means for her place in the family. Should we name Zeus as the father of these last three offspring, rather than Tyndareus? Does a divine link mean they had some kind of

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[8] This is suggested in the *Iliad* by the naming of Helen alongside the other goods which Paris took from Menelaus – see *Il.* 3.255, 3.281-7, 3.458-9 and 7.350-1. See Brown (1997) on the economic and domestic significance of female figures such as Aphrodite, Pandora and Helen.

[9] The notion of womankind, and especially Helen, as a "beautiful evil" (καλὸν κακόν) is a recurring theme in Blondell (2013); see especially 15-7. Helen is called a curse (πῆμα) by the Trojan elders at *Il.* 3.160; see below in this chapter. See Clay (2003) 100-28 for a thorough interpretation of the story of Prometheus and Pandora in both Hesiodic poems, and her argument that the two accounts complement rather than contradict one another. Franco (2014) focuses on the presentation of Pandora as "doggish".

[10] Marquardt (1982).

[11] See West (1985) 94-6.

[12] West (1985) 114-5, 123.

extraordinary birth, or are more than mortal? The evidence at this point in the text cannot answer these questions. Another fragment, from a scholion to Pindar's *Nemean Ode* 10.150a, gives Helen different parentage altogether, claiming that Hesiod named her parents as Zeus and an Oceanid (F24 M-W). However, F176 (M-W) of the *Catalogue* names Helen as one of the three daughters who were cursed by Aphrodite to be unfaithful to their husbands (later explained in Stesichorus by Tyndareus' failure to sacrifice to the goddess – *PMG* 223). The grouping of three daughters matches the offspring given to Leda and Tyndareus in F23a (M-W), but Helen has now replaced Phylonoe. By the point in the text when Helen's marriage is being planned, Tyndareus plays the social role of her father, and no link to Zeus is mentioned (F 199.8, 204.61 M-W). It is possible to justify these inconsistencies by dismissing F24 as corrupt,[13] but the other fragments do not provide an altogether clear picture either. The resulting confusion suggests that there may have been conflicting traditions of Helen's parentage even in the early days of the *Catalogue*'s formation. Although Helen features fairly prominently in the poem, we are given no consistent impression of where she fits into a wider family; the simplest question of to whom she belongs is not easily answered.

The section of the *Catalogue* in which Helen features most prominently is the so-called "Wooing of Helen" (or *Helenafreite*),[14] which runs from F196-204 (M-W) and describes the marriage contest for her hand, the men who presented themselves as suitors, and the gifts they sent. It is likely that this opened the fifth and final book of the poem, which makes it a textually prominent section.[15] The list of her suitors may have contained between 25 and 30 names, but not all of these are extant;[16] despite this, there is a noticeable correspondence between the names listed as her suitors and the names of combatants in the *Iliad*'s catalogue of ships in book two, as well as Helen's own catalogue of the Achaeans from the walls of Troy in book three. Many of the prominent heroes of the Trojan war are named as her suitors, including Achilles in his conspicuous absence, who was too young to court Helen (F204.87-92 M-W), and in the *Iliad* has withdrawn from battle at the time of the catalogue of ships. This explanation of his absence from the bridal contest may have been prompted by the close association of the two characters in the tradition, also reflected in the F1 of the *Cypria*, discussed in the previous chapter.[17] Agamemnon, already married to

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[13] As does West (1985) 43 n.25.
[14] Hirschberger (2004) 397-426.
[15] West (1985) 115; the problems with this interpretation are described by Cingano, in Hunter (2005) 121-4.
[16] West (1985) 117.
[17] Helen and Achilles are named as twin agents of the war in this fragment – see chapter 2 above, 58-9. A connection between the two is suggested in the *Iliad* through a different tactic, as they are each the "best" and

Clytemnestra but too important a warrior to be left out of the picture, is present on behalf of his brother Menelaus, providing sumptuous gifts. This correspondence between the catalogues may suggest that one poem is consciously mimicking the other, and so West calls the Hesiodic list "influenced by Homer".[18] While it is not necessary to posit a direction of influence between the two poems, there is certainly a strong traditional link between the courtship and the war. Each of the warriors named was bound by oath to protect whoever won Helen (F196.77-85 M-W), and that is what drove so many to join the campaign against Troy. This link means that, even as we hear of what should be a joyous and celebratory occasion of marriage, the audience is reminded of the war to come. This has implications for our perception of Helen. At a time when she should be presented as a maiden, innocent as a young girl, we see her with the knowledge of what is to come, and the bloodshed she will cause. The *Catalogue*'s allusiveness therefore means that Helen is never innocent, even before her marriage; she is always associated with war and destruction. That this destructive power is linked to her desirability is reminiscent not just of Pandora but also of the succession myth of the *Theogony*, and its perception of female sexuality as dangerous and disruptive.[19] As the passage continues, we find further evidence that the destruction of the heroes is specifically linked with the marriage of Helen.

Fragment 204 M-W of the *Catalogue* brings to a close the bridal contest for Helen with her marriage to Menelaus (line 86-8) and the birth of their daughter Hermione (95-6). Immediately after this the focus of the text changes from earthly marriage to divine strife, as Zeus plans the end of the heroes (discussed in chapter 1). This section seems to occupy a liminal point in the text, marking the transition between the mortal-divine genealogies that precede it, and Zeus' plan for mass destruction which follows. The textual proximity between Helen's marriage and Zeus' decision to destroy the demigods suggests that she has a special relevance to this shift in relations between men and gods. Indeed, it is not just the marriage of Helen to Menelaus that seems to have relevance, but the birth of their daughter, Hermione.

The birth of Hermione is mentioned immediately after the conclusion of the contest for Helen with her marriage to Menelaus. It would be reasonable for this moment to be the climax of this section of the poem, with the birth of a child cementing the union between the

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"most beautiful" of their sex; see Blondell (2013) 53-4. Their connection continues in later traditions: Pausanias (3.19.11-3) describes a cult on the island of Leuke which claimed that Helen and Achilles had lived together there after death.

[18] West (1985) 115-7.

[19] See chapter 1, 24-31.

two, but instead the child is called ἄελπτον, "unexpected" (F204.95 M-W). Immediately after this, the gods are described as being in strife (πάντες δὲ θεοὶ δίχα θυμὸν ἔθεντο / ἐξ ἔριδος 95-6) and Zeus plans great destruction (96-123 – this section is badly preserved, but seems to suggest the end of the age of demigods and the permanent separation of men from gods).[20] This end to Helen's betrothal is jarring; it does not make sense for a child to be "unexpected" after such a long period of marriage preparations. After such a lengthy and elaborate section describing the marriage contest, the birth of Hermione therefore seems entirely anti-climactic. Helen's great desirability, which drew so many to vie for her hand in marriage, is contrasted with her lack of fecundity. The birth of a single daughter is a disappointment, and Helen, for all her sexual allure, does not fulfil the expected role of a wife. In the next lines of this section of the *Catalogue*, the distress of the gods, and the plan of Zeus to separate gods from men, forms a dramatic contrast with the anticlimactic end of the section on Helen. It also reminds us of the divine strife that characterised an earlier time in the gods' history, before Zeus secured his supremacy and brought an end to the conflict of succession, as explained in part one of this thesis. In the *Theogony*, the divine succession myth demonstrates the destabilising power of female procreation, and Helen's failure to produce more children should be read in this context. The birth of Hermione, an "unhoped for" daughter whose birth is passed over without further comment, makes it clear that Helen is no such threat as were Gaia, or Metis, in the divine succession myth. Helen is shown to be mortal, with an unremarkable mortal daughter, and so this birth passes without any fanfare or celebration.

In the *Catalogue*, then, Helen's marriage and the birth of her child are placed at a central position in the text, and in cosmic history, between a time of union between gods and mortals, and the ultimate separation of the two. Helen's marriage and the birth of Hermione are directly linked with the plan of Zeus to end the heroes, but there is no suggestion of a causal connection.[21] This is reflective of the inevitability of the war, and Helen's part in it – this sequence of events has been planned since before her birth, and it is not caused by any particular action on her part, but by her very existence. This is consistent with the brief reference to her as the cause of the destruction of the heroes in *Works and Days* – the war was fought "for the sake of lovely-haired Helen" (Ἑλένης ἕνεκ' ἠυκόμοιο 165) – and her similarity to Pandora as an inherent curse on mankind. Helen's positioning in history also

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[20]See chapter 1, 46-9.

[21] The juxtaposition of Hermione's birth and the planned destruction is, however, suggestive of the link between maternity and mortality which Murnaghan (1992) has suggested is embedded in the hexameter tradition. See below in this chapter for more on how this association may be related to Helen.

means that she is isolated, and belongs with neither gods nor men. This isolation, and its effect on her traditional characterisation, will remain an important theme throughout this chapter.

We have seen in the previous chapter that the *Cypria* of the Epic Cycle seems to have made use of a similar idea of cosmic history as the Hesiodic poems. In particular, it presents the Trojan war as a significant event in the end of the heroes. The relevant fragment, discussed in chapter 2, is found in the scholion to *Iliad* 1.5, Διὸς δ᾽ ἐτελείετο βουλή ("the will of Zeus was being accomplished").[22] Although Helen is not mentioned by name in this passage, the scholiast's introduction names two immediate causes for the war: the marriage of Thetis to a mortal, and the birth of a beautiful daughter (τὴν Θέτιδος θνητογαμίαν καὶ θυγατρὸς καλῆς γένναν F1 Davies). This refers to the dual instruments of mass death at Troy: the beautiful Helen over whom the war began, and Achilles, whose withdrawal from battle increased the numbers of deaths on both sides.[23] It is striking that it is not the marriage or abduction of Helen which is named as the trigger for the conflict – it is her birth. Rather than citing a specific action or event as the cause of the war, this suggests that the very existence of Helen was enough to bring Zeus' plan into effect. As Mayer argues, Helen is presented as a curse in herself, in a way that echoes the function of the Hesiodic Pandora.[24] She does not need to do anything, or make any kind of transgression, in order to be blamed for the war: she is responsible from the moment of her birth.

Other fragments of the *Cypria* tell of the birth of Helen, but unfortunately, the ambiguity of her family which we found in the *Catalogue* is not made any clearer by the accounts of the *Cypria*, as here we are presented with more candidates for her parentage. Fragment 10 of the poem, quoted by Athenaeus (F10 Davies), names Helen's parents as Nemesis and Zeus, and the event of her conception is a forceful and violent rape. This passage must have presented Nemesis as a minor deity, a personification of feelings of guilt and blame; as Zeus chased her over land and sea, she repeatedly changed shape in an attempt to evade him. When he eventually subdued her, Helen was conceived "under harsh compulsion" (κρατερῆς ὑπ᾽ ἀνάγκης F10.3). The darkness and violence of this scene has more in common with the unions described in Hesiod's *Theogony* than anything Homeric. It

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[22] See chapter 2, 24-31, for more on the significance of this fragment.

[23] Thetis' marriage also brings to mind the beauty contest between the goddesses which resulted in Paris' possession of Helen; however, the testimony of Eustathius suggests that Achilles was understood to be the crucial element in the destruction caused by the war, alongside Helen (*Ad lliadem* 1.33.15 (TLG)).

[24] Mayer (1996) 12-3.

also bears similarities with Apollodorus' account of the conception of Achilles, when Thetis repeatedly changes shape in order to evade the shame of mating with the mortal Peleus (*Bibliotheca* 3.13.5). The sharing of this motif between the conceptions of Achilles and Helen echoes their pairing as the twin agents of the war in the proem to the *Cypria* (F1 Davies); the unwillingness of the female in each union could allude to the destructive power of the resulting offspring. It seems likely that the *Cypria* emphasised the similarities between the two key characters and thus stressed Helen's crucial role in the war and in the unfolding of cosmic history. The narrative of her conception and birth may have added to that emphasis.

Fragment 11 of the *Cypria*, compiled from two accounts of Philodemus and Apollodorus, supplements the story of Zeus and Nemesis and introduces a mortal woman as Helen's surrogate mother (F11 Davies). Of the two, Apollodorus gives the fuller account: Zeus and Nemesis were in the form of a swan and a goose when they came together, and so Nemesis produced an egg. This egg was then found by a shepherd, who gave it to the mortal Leda, and she raised the child as her own. This seems somewhat like a conflation of two stories, to include both divine and mortal mothers; the simplified version, that Zeus raped Leda in the form of a swan, was later popularised by Ovid.[25] The tone of the version including Nemesis is much darker, but it is impossible now to give either version precedence of date.[26] Fragments and testimonia of the *Cypria* do suggest that Castor and Polydeuces were included in the poem as Helen's brothers, but the summary of Proclus and the account of fragment 9 (F9 Davies) disagree on whether they shared their immortality, or only one of them was immortal. Certain key figures emerge from the evidence of the *Cypria* in relation to Helen: Zeus, Nemesis, Leda and the two brothers. However, this evidence does not create a clear impression of Helen's place in the family; neither does it match satisfactorily alongside the evidence from the *Catalogue*. The lack of consensus in the evidence therefore suggests that there were several different accounts of Helen's parentage and birth across the hexameter tradition, with none of them achieving an authoritative status. The result for Helen's characterisation is that her origins and family are something of a mystery. We are missing the genealogical connections which, as we saw with the example of Tydeus and Diomedes in the previous chapter, can play a significant role in understanding a character's actions. What

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[25] *Met.* 6.109

[26] Austin (1994) 46 n.32 thinks the Nemesis version "has the ring of a genuine, archaic cosmogony dating from the mythopoeic age, rather than of fiction invented by a sophisticated reader of the *Iliad* to explain Helen's role and behaviour in the epic".

is much more certain is Helen's place in the timeline of cosmic history, which presents her as a central, isolated figure. Helen is a curse or instrument of destruction, in the same way as the Hesiodic Pandora, rather than a naturalistic human character.

From this investigation of the Hesiodic poems and the *Cypria* of the Epic Cycle it therefore seems that the traditional hexameter depiction of Helen reduces her to a mere instrument, de-personalising her to such an extent that it is not even important to present a consistent picture of her parentage and family. Helen has a position and purpose of unique significance in the traditional hexameter narrative of history, but her position in human society – as part of a family – is ambiguous. In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, however, she becomes a compelling individual character who is subject to many different interpretations. In the remainder of this chapter I consider how the Homeric poems manage to reflect Helen's position and role in the hexameter tradition while also presenting her as fully-formed mimetic character who is capable of holding our attention and provoking varying emotional reactions.

Now that we have seen how Helen is presented in the poems of Hesiod and the Cycle, and how she fits into the traditional narrative of genealogical history, I turn to the Homeric poems. The parentage, conception and birth of Helen, which are the subject of such ambiguity in the other poems, are not directly narrated in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, but I will examine what information we can gain about her family from her Homeric epithets, and brief references to her blood relatives. The most prominent aspect of Helen's characterisation in Hesiod and the *Cypria* is her causal role in the Trojan war, and her similarity to Pandora as a curse on mankind. Although the story of the destruction of the heroes is not explicitly referred to in either of the Homeric poems, I investigate whether Helen's role in their destruction may be suggested by her characterisation. In this way, I attempt to read the Homeric Helen in the light of her traditional role in genealogical history, and discover how much the Homeric poems interact with or allude to that tradition in order to form her distinct character.

The first appearance of Helen in the *Iliad* is in book three, as the two armies prepare for the duel combat between Paris and Menelaus. At line 121 the narration leaves the battlefield and describes Iris going as a messenger (ἄγγελος ἦλθεν 121) to Helen in order to inform her of the impending duel. Iris' actions here seem strangely unmotivated. As Kennedy argues, she is usually sent on errands by more powerful gods, with an express

purpose, rather than going of her own volition as she seems to be here.[27]   In appearing to Helen she takes the form of her sister-in-law, Laodice (122-4); this emphasises that the real Laodice, and the other members of Helen's family by marriage, had not thought to inform her.[28]   Blondell points out that the main effect of Iris' summoning of Helen is that it shows that "no human being took the trouble to let Helen know her fate was hanging in the balance".[29]   Helen's isolation is also suggested by the fact that she seems to be alone when Iris finds her, weaving in her chamber (125).   Although it transpires that she must have been accompanied by two handmaidens, who later follow her out to the city wall (143-4), the first sight of Helen by Iris and by the audience is of a lone woman, absorbed in her task.

The robe which Helen is weaving is also of interest because of its subject-matter, which depicts the battles of the Trojans and Achaeans (126-8).[30]   As has been shown by some interpreters, the action of weaving this image casts Helen in a creative role similar to that of a poet, but also suggests her detached perspective, as she is able to separate herself from the events going on around her, and become a spectator.[31]   It may also suggest a certain level of self-involvement, as the battles she depicts are being fought "for her sake" (ἔθεν εἴνεκα 128), making Helen the subject of the image even though she does not feature in it.   The same language is used here as we found in the *Works and Days* (165) to describe Helen as the simple cause of the war; as the image is focalised through Helen, this suggests that she is well aware of her causal role.   Iris, when she tells Helen of the imminent duel, says that Paris and Menelaus will be fighting "over you" (περὶ σεῖο 137), and she sees no need to sensitively skim over the cause of the battle and of the whole war.   This is consistent with the depiction of Helen as the cause and subject of the conflict throughout both Homeric poems; there is no suggestion of any dispute or debate over what the war is really about, or any other motive for the Greek invasion.[32]   In this brief first appearance, in which Helen has not spoken a word,

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[27] Kennedy (1986).

[28] Roisman (2006) 9 suggests that the choice of Laodice shows that Helen is subjugated to her husband's family, as Helen obeys her instructions.

[29] Blondell (2010) 3.

[30] Roisman (2006) 9 points out that the imagery of Helen's robe is unique; the only comparable design is Andromache's (22.440-1), but hers is made up of abstract floral patterns rather than dramatic scenes. Roisman further argues that the subject of Helen's weaving suggests she accepts responsibility for the war (2006) 10, but her self-blame does not become evident until her she utters her first death-wish later in this scene.

[31] The association between weaving and poetry is made by the bT scholiast at 3.126-7· ἀξιόχρεων ἀρχέτυπον ἀνέπλασεν ὁ ποιητὴς τῆς ἰδίας ποιήσεως ("the poet has formed a worthy archetype for his own poetry"). See Clader (1976) 7-9, Suzuki (1989) 40-3. On Helen's detachment, see Taplin (1992) 96-102.

[32] Helen is referred to as the subject of the war at *Iliad* 1.159-60; 3.126-28,156-57; 4.173-74; 6.344-58; 7.350-51; 9.339; 19.325; 22.114-16;24.762-74; *Odyssey* 4.235-89; 11.438; 14.68-69; 17.118-19; 22.226-30; 23.218-21.

we already gain an impression of her as isolated, and her causal role in the war is suggested as a possible reason for that isolation.

When Iris has informed Helen of the duel, and instructed her to "come here" (δεῦρ᾽ ἴθι 130) and watch it, she then implants in Helen a longing for her husband and her former life (γλυκὺν ἵμερον ἔμβαλε θυμῷ "she put into her heart sweet longing" 139). While this longing is later expressed by Helen in her own words, at this point it just seems to be a result of Iris' influence over her. Like her summoning of Helen, Iris' emotional manipulation suggests that Helen is lacking in her own volition or power, and is subject to the instructions and desires of others. Her silent acquiescence to Iris' instructions suggests that she is accustomed to this powerlessness. We will see more evidence of this later in book three, after the Teichoskopia.

When Helen arrives at the walls to spectate upon the duel, the Trojan elders pass comment on her, and their opinion is inherently ambivalent. They absolve the Trojans and Achaeans from blame for fighting over her, saying that "it is not shameful" (οὐ νέμεσις 156) for them. No mention is made of whether Helen is to blame, or should feel shame. Instead, she is just the subject of the men's dispute; they are fighting ἀμφὶ γυναικί, "over the woman" (157). This casts her as property, rather than an agent who might bear shame or responsibility. Her worth as property is proven by her beauty, which makes her "terribly like the immortal goddesses to look at" (αἰνῶς ἀθανάτῃσι θεῇς εἰς ὦπα ἔοικεν 158). Indeed, her beauty itself is ambivalent; it is what makes her worth fighting over, but like the gods it inspires fear. The negative effect of her presence is suggested in the men's wish that she leave Troy, as if she were to stay she would be a "curse upon us and our children to come" (μηδ᾽ ἡμῖν τεκέεσσί τ᾽ ὀπίσσω πῆμα λίποιτο 160).[33] A curse, πῆμα, is the same word used of Pandora in Hesiod, and alludes to Helen's destructive power. As well as being suggestive of her instrumental role in the war, the idea of Helen being a curse on children of the future makes her the antithesis of the expected role of women as pro-creators, and may be reflective of a deeper connection between maternity and mortality which Murnaghan argues is embedded in the hexameter tradition.[34] Like Pandora, Helen inspires conflicting responses

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[33] The idea of a woman as both a beautiful and an evil thing is embodied in the figure of the Hesiodic Pandora, the original καλὸν κακόν (*Theogony* 585); the relevance of this label to Helen is discussed in Blondell (2010; 2013). Brown (1997) argues that the 'Pandora complex' is a pervasive element of attitudes to women in the hexameter tradition.

[34] Murnaghan (1992); see below for more on this connection in relation to Helen.

from men. Her beauty is alluring to them, but they are well aware of her power to make their lives miserable.

When Priam sees Helen and addresses her, he affectionately calls her "dear child" (φίλον τέκος 162) and invites her to sit by him. It is not clear whether he is speaking in response to the elders' words, or if he even hears them, but he too brings up the issue of blame. While the elders had relieved the warriors of any shame, Priam assures Helen that he does not blame her for the war – "to me the gods are surely the cause" (θεοί νύ μοι αἴτιοι εἰσιν 164). Assigning responsibility to the gods in this fatalistic way is perhaps suited to the wisdom of his old age, but an audience familiar with the story of Zeus' plan to destroy the heroes could find here an allusion which gives Priam's words further significance. Priam's words are designed to be reassuring to Helen, but they also acknowledge the possibility that she is blamed and hated by others. Helen's reply to him is courteous in its first line, and reciprocates his familial greeting by calling him "respected and feared to me, dear husband's father" (αἰδοῖός τέ μοί ἐσσι, φίλε ἑκυρέ, δεινός τε 172). However, she then expresses her deep shame by wishing death on herself. This ignores Priam's attempt to put her at ease, and she speaks of her regret for four lines before actually replying to Priam's request to identify Agamemnon.[35]

This speech is the first of three instances in the poem when Helen wishes for her own death. Here, she begins by speaking fondly of her life in Sparta, and wishes she had chosen death rather than leaving that life to follow Paris. Specifically, she wishes that "evil death had been pleasing to me" (ὡς ὄφελεν θάνατός μοι ἁδεῖν κακός 173), the use of ἁδεῖν suggesting pleasure or gratification, and alluding to the pleasure that she in fact gained by leaving with Paris. She lists as the things she misses her bedchamber (θάλαμον 174), her blood-relations (γνωτούς),[36] her "late-born" daughter (παῖδά τε τηλυγέτην 175),[37] and her lovely companions (ὁμηλικίην ἐρατεινήν). This presents an image of a happy marital and domestic life that will be absent from her later expressions of shame; by mentioning her bedchamber she also refers obliquely to Menelaus. However, remembering her husband by

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[35] Blondell (2010) argues that Helen's self-blame is an assertion of her independent agency, which the male characters of the poem attempt to take from her by excusing her of blame for her actions; their heroic values depend on her lack of agency.

[36] This term most commonly refers to the closest family members, sometimes particularly brothers (as at *Il.* 17.35; 22.234; 3.236).

[37] The etymology of this adjective is uncertain, and it could be a simple term of affection. In the context of Helen's daughter, who in the *Catalogue* is called ἄελπτον (unhoped for, unexpected), this further meaning may seem suitable; that of being "born late" and therefore especially cherished. See Kirk (1985) 290.

the symbol of their shared bedroom may suggest the shallowness of their relationship – it certainly does not suggest the depth of feeling expressed between Andromache and Hector in their later meeting on the walls.[38] This combined mention of her family members by blood and by marriage suggests that Helen remembers a time when she was united with all of them. It is only since she left them for Troy that she has been separated from them. Her self-hatred seems to stem from the fact that her own actions have isolated her from her family.

Helen's role in the Teichoskopia, as she identifies for Priam first Agamemnon, then Odysseus and Ajax, again seems to suggest that she has a detached perspective on events as they happen. As she picks out these Greeks on the battlefield below, she could just as well be identifying figures in her woven picture which she had left indoors. The Teichoskopia as a whole is a somewhat artificial construction, coming at this late stage in the war, and Helen's role as spectator emphasises her lack of direct involvement in events.[39] This detachment is suggested when she identifies her former brother-in-law, followed by the words εἴ ποτ᾽ ἔην γε (180). This formulaic expression, usually translated "if he ever was",[40] is found in both Homeric poems to refer to people who are so impossibly remote, either by distance or by time, that they seem unreal.[41] It is thus used by Penelope to refer to Odysseus when she feels the pain of his long absence (19.315), and so, as Kirk points out, "expresses nostalgia and regret at how things have changed".[42] It is therefore clear that Helen feels longing for her former life in Sparta, and in the same line she uses an insult against herself which suggests that she herself is to blame for that. She here calls herself "dog-face" (κυνώπιδος 180); this is the only instance in the poem of this term being used self-reflexively. The significance of this insult is discussed further below, as Helen calls herself "dog" twice more later in the poem. The shame which is implied by this term echoes the feelings of self-hatred and blame which Helen expressed in her death-wish, while also alluding to her destructive role in the war.

After answering Priam's questions about the Greeks, Helen's mind wanders and she notices the absence of Castor and Polydeuces, calling them "my brothers, born from the same

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[38] The complexity of Andromache's relationship with Hector, superseding the role of husband to represent her whole family, is expressed at *Iliad* 6.429-30; see Graziosi and Haubold (2010) 44-7.
[39] See Kirk (1985) 286-7 on the nature of the episode; Tsagarakis (1982) presents an alternative argument for the validity of the duel and the Teichoskopia at this point in the war.
[40] Kirk (1985) 290.
[41] See also *Il.* 11.762 and 24.426.
[42] Kirk (1985) 290. Kirk admits that there is a "bare possibility" that ἔην here is first-person rather than third-person and refers to Helen herself, but this would not be consistent with the other Homeric uses of the phrase and there is no reason to suppose it would be more appropriate here.

mother" (αὐτοκασιγνήτω, τώ μοι μία γείνατο μήτηρ 238). Referring to them in this way, rather than by their shared paternity, avoids any mention of Zeus as their father. This is consistent with Helen's silence throughout the Homeric poems about her divine heritage, as we will see further below.[43] When Helen notices that her brothers are absent, she imagines that perhaps they are reluctant to fight because of the shame they would face by association with her (241-2). This suggests again that Helen believes her own actions have separated her from her family, this time by shame if not geographical distance. Her descriptions of her brothers as "marshals of the host" (κοσμήτορε λαῶν 236), "tamer of horses" (ἱππόδαμον 237) and "good boxer" (πὺξ ἀγαθόν) contrast with her own shamefulness and add to her sense of separation. The poet then reveals that the divide between brothers and sister is greater even than that, as they are "already held by the life-giving earth there in Lacedaemon" (τοὺς δ᾽ ἤδη κάτεχεν φυσίζοος αἶα / ἐν Λακεδαίμονι αὖθι 243-4). αὖθι, "there", indicates their geographical separation, and ἤδη, "already", suggests that their death was early, if inevitable. There is no mention here of the story referred to in the *Odyssey* (11.298-304), that the two brothers share an alternating immortality.[44] With Helen's brothers dead, her isolation from her blood-family is emphasised. With the male members of the line gone, there is no more opportunity for it to be continued into the next generation.

Another significant aspect of Helen's presentation in the Teichoskopia is that here she is called Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα ("born of Zeus", 3.199) for the first time, as she identifies Odysseus to Priam. This epithet is used only of Helen (twice in the *Iliad* and twice in the *Odyssey*) and Athene (once in the *Odyssey*), and so seems to "belong" to Helen more than anyone else.[45] It does not seem immediately clear why the poet may want to remind his audience of her divine parentage at this particular point in the narrative. Perhaps this epithet carries a suggestion that her extraordinary powers of sight and recognition are a result of her semi-divinity, but it does not seem to impart any particular emphasis. Later on in book three, however, Helen's divine epithets seem to emphasise by contrast her actual lack of power or even volition. After the duel between Menelaus and Paris is cut short when Aphrodite snatches up her favourite and transports him back to the safety of his home (380-2), the focus returns to Helen, still on the walls and now surrounded by the women of Troy (383-4). As Iris had

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[43] Helen is only named as Zeus' daughter by the poet, in a series of epithets, discussed below in this chapter, 109-110.

[44] This is mentioned during Odysseus' catalogue of honourable women; Leda and Tyndareus are named as the parents of Castor and Polydeuces, but Helen's name is conspicuously absent.

[45] Clader (1976) 41-62 presents useful tables of Helen's epithets, and their usages for other female characters. She has previously been called δῖα γυναικῶν (3.171), but this use of δῖα is widely applied to liken a character to a god and does not refer to divine parentage.

earlier in this book, Aphrodite appears to Helen in the guise of a friend – this time an old Spartan woman who had worked wool for her (388) – and issues instructions. Aphrodite's disguise is suggestive of the happy domestic life Helen had enjoyed before the war, which she had harked back to in her first death-wish. Despite the disguise, Helen recognises the goddess immediately (395-7), which suggests either that she is accustomed to such deception, or that Aphrodite had not gone to great lengths to conceal her true identity – her divinely lovely neck, bosom, and eyes betray her (396-7). Helen then addresses Aphrodite angrily rather than reverently, mockingly asking whether there are any other men in far-flung places she would like to lead her to, and even telling the goddess to abandon Olumpus and live as Paris' slave herself rather than make her go back to him (399-409). This defiantly irreverent attitude is quite shocking, and momentarily suggests that Helen may be on an equal footing with this fellow "daughter of Zeus".[46] However, Aphrodite replies by threatening to withdraw her favour and hate Helen "just as now I love you exceedingly" (ὡς νῦν ἔκπαγλα φίλησα 415) so that she will perish at the hands of the opposing armies (416-7). It is at this moment in the text, when Helen is seized with fear by Aphrodite's harsh words, that she is again called Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα (418). This could be seen as an instance of the inappropriate use of an epithet when it is not contextually relevant, like Achilles being called "swift-footed" when he is actually stubbornly inactive.[47] However, just as Achilles' traditional epithet emphasises the problematic nature of his current situation, so here the divine epithet used of Helen makes it clear that there is a tension in her character. At a moment of total powerlessness, when for the second time in the book she has been forced to acquiesce to the demands of a goddess, the poet invokes her divine heritage. Helen, we are reminded, is born of Zeus, just like Aphrodite, but for some reason she is completely without any divine power, privilege, or even the free-will we would expect of a normal mortal woman.

The ironic effect of this divine epithet is repeated just a few lines later, when Helen has reached Paris' bedchamber. Aphrodite, here given her traditional epithet of φιλομμειδής ("laughter-loving" 424), positions a chair for Helen, who sits upon it - Ἑλένη, κούρη Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο ("Helen, daughter of Zeus who bears the aegis" 426). Aphrodite's subservient action at first suggests a superficial reversal of roles, but it is clear from Helen's scolding speech to Paris that follows (427-36) that she is being forced to act against her will. The epithet used here is even more emphatic about her parentage than the previous two uses of

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[46] This epithet, Διὸς θυγάτηρ, is most strongly associated with Aphrodite and especially when she intervenes in human events, but is also used of Helen once in the *Odyssey* - see Clader (1976) 53-4, and below in this chapter.
[47] See Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 51-3.

Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα, as it includes a reference to the ultimate symbol of Zeus' power – his aegis. The contrast between this image of divine power, and Helen's enforced obedience, makes it clear that her paternal link to Zeus is essentially meaningless to her, as it offers her no kind of privilege or advantage. Rather, it may be that her divine heritage actually disadvantages her, if we see it as the source of her great beauty and allure. In the context of Helen's role elsewhere in the hexameter tradition, however, such reminders of Zeus' parentage have a more sinister significance. The evidence studied earlier in this chapter, describing the plan of Zeus to bring an end to the heroes, casts Helen as his instrument of destruction. As I argue above, there is no single authoritative tradition of Helen's parentage and birth in the surviving evidence. She does, however, seem to have a clear position in traditional cosmic history. She exists at the termination point of the time of the heroes, and it is her birth, rather than the event of her marriage or abduction, which is presented as the crucial moment which leads to the Trojan war. In this light, her powerlessness at the hands of Iris and especially Aphrodite, and the epithets' emphasis on her divine father, make more sense. If Helen is born to Zeus expressly to bring about the war and to cause manifold deaths, she is at the mercy not just of these two goddesses in these particular scenes, but of the whole structure of cosmic history. Furthermore, Zeus is only ever named as her father by the poet, and never by Helen herself or other characters, suggesting that they are either unaware of her divine parentage, or do not place any importance on it. For Helen, being the offspring of a god is not a source of honour, or a reason to boast, but the very reason why she is in such a miserable situation as the Trojan war, and has no hope of escaping from it. By the end of book three, she has repeatedly expressed the deep shame and regret she feels for her actions, most strikingly by wishing for her own death when she speaks to Priam. She repeats this wish twice more in the course of the poem, and as she does so her despair and isolation become an increasingly defining aspect of her character.

Helen's first death-wish had depicted her life in Sparta as a happy one, and her regret only stretched as far back as the point when she left that life to be with Paris. Her second death-wish has a different perspective, and suggests that Helen sees her whole life as a source of shame. She makes this speech when Hector visits Paris and his wife at their home in the city in book six. Hector addresses his brother only as the sole cause of war (σέο δ᾽ εἵνεκ᾽ αὐτή τε πτόλεμός τε / ἄστυ τόδ᾽ ἀμφιδέδηε 6.328-9), and charges him to get up and protect the endangered city (ἀλλ᾽ ἄνα, μὴ τάχα ἄστυ πυρὸς δηίοιο θέρηται 331). When Paris has offered his reply, Helen then speaks up and addresses Hector, unbidden. Whereas Paris had

deflected the blame that Hector had placed on him for the war, saying he stayed in the house from sorrow – ἄχεϊ (336) – rather than cowardice or pride, Helen seems to take full responsibility, and launches immediately into her most elaborate death-wish lament (6.345-51). Here, she imagines a death on the very day she was born from her mother. Opening with this declaration of shame can be seen as a clever rhetorical tool, as it elicits sympathy and takes away from Hector the power to make her feel more guilt than she already does.[48] However, when Helen makes this speech, like her previous speech to Priam in book three, no mention of her guilt has been made, and no other character has suggested that she should be feeling shame; indeed, Priam had already absolved her of any guilt. This makes it possible that Helen's immediate, unprovoked expressions of shame are more than a hunt for sympathy. They instead suggest a deep self-involvement, which may have been brought on by the shame she feels, but is not exclusively caused by the censure of others. Hector, like Priam, had tried to absolve Helen of guilt by placing the blame elsewhere, but her self-reflexive shame is such that she cannot accept that absolution.

The greatest difference between this death-wish and her first is the time of death that Helen imagines for herself. Rather than dying before she could leave Sparta, she wishes she had died on the very day she was born (ὥς μ᾽ ὄφελ᾽ ἤματι τῷ ὅτε με πρῶτον τέκε μήτηρ 345). Her mother is not named in this imagining, so an audience may take this to refer to the mortal Leda, or the immortal Nemesis, depending on what other stories they may have known. It may be, however, that the type of death she imagines for herself – at the hands of the winds or the waves – is suggestive of the birth of her patroness, Aphrodite, from the foam of the sea.[49] Her elemental references also carry connotations of the exposure of babies (on mountains – εἰς ὄρος 347) and the abduction of maidens before marriage (traditionally by θύελλα – a gust of wind, 346).[50] All of these associations are suited to Helen's imaginings, as it is her marriages that have been the cause of the shame she feels, and a death soon after birth would have prevented them from occurring. The possible connection with Aphrodite, where Helen's imagined death echoes the goddess's birth, emphasises Helen's rejection of her patroness, which she expressed directly when the two met earlier in the poem (3.383-447), but also perhaps the inevitability of their relationship.

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[48] Graziosi and Haubold (2010) 175.
[49] As described in Hes. *Theog.* 188-99 and *Hom. Hymn* 6; see Graziosi and Haubold (2010) 175.
[50] Graziosi and Haubold (2010) 175.

The most significant aspect of Helen's speech from the point of view of this study is that it shows a different perspective on her life and actions. Rather than expressing regret for leaving Sparta and her family, Helen now wishes away her whole life. This suggests a greater level of shame than her first death-wish, as she now seems to perceive her very existence as shameful. Whereas it was clear in her previous death-wish that she saw her elopement with Paris as the cause of her later troubles, in this speech it is not any specific actions which cause her shame and self-hatred, but the very fact of her birth. Such a conception of herself as innately bad is reflective of her traditional role as the cause of the war and the destruction of the heroes. It is not suggested that Helen is necessarily aware of her instrumental significance, but her own opinion of herself does match up with it.

In her first death-wish, Helen had presented her married life in Sparta as a happy one. In her speech in book six, however, this is not the case, and she seems to reject all relationships, both by blood and marriage. However, after this elaborate death-wish she makes a different kind of wish, that "since the gods have decreed these evils" (αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ τάδε γ᾽ ὧδε θεοὶ κακὰ τεκμήραντο 349), she had married a better husband (ἀνδρὸς … ἀμείνονος 350) than Paris. That she is referring to Paris rather than Menelaus is made clear when she wishes for someone who feels the blame of his fellow men (ὃς ᾔδη νέμεσίν τε καὶ αἴσχεα πόλλ᾽ ἀνθρώπων 351), and then refers to "this man" (τούτῳ 352). The clear implication of this wish, and her invitation to Hector to sit with her (354-5), is that Hector is the husband she would wish for. This may explain why she did not mention her first husband, or her former married life, as she did in her first death-wish; she may be tailoring her death-wish to suit the situation. If she is trying to ingratiate herself with Hector here, or even seduce him, it would not make sense for her to speak favourably of her life in Sparta.

However, it is important that Helen here offers a fatalistic view of her life, and sees her troubles as the result of the gods' plans, and not solely of her own actions. Rather than attempting to fight against her situation, she seems resigned that her part in the war had been planned by the gods, and her desire for a better man with whom to betray her first husband is, in this light, rather more flippant. The speech as a whole makes it clear that she would rather be dead, and another choice of husband would be just a consolation prize. Her wish for another husband was, according to some traditions, fulfilled after Paris' death by a marriage to Deiphobus; it may be possible that an oblique allusion is made to that tradition here. I would argue, however, that this is not the main thrust of Helen's speech. Her wish for another husband is part of her more significant expression of her self-hatred, and her fatalistic

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view of her own life. She returns to this theme at the very end of her speech, and even offers a justification for the suffering she has caused: the gods have planned these evils "so that we may be worthy of song for men to come" (ὡς καὶ ὀπίσσω / ἀνθρώποισι πελώμεθ᾽ ἀοίδιμοι ἐσσομένοισι 357-8). This is perhaps the clearest indication in the poem of Helen's poetic detachment, and suggests that she does not feel control over her life and fate. She here takes a much longer-term perspective on events, and sees her life and the events of the current time in the context of a wider pattern of history. Hector's reply to her is terse, and emphasises his duties elsewhere, first to his army, and then to his wife and son, whom he wishes to see before rejoining battle (360-8). Hector lacks the fatalistic, long-term view of his life that Helen had, and still clings to the notion that events are under his control. His greatest concern is still his family, and the scene which follows, of his encounter with Andromache and Astyanax on the walls, shows how he and his wife struggle to imagine how their future will unfold.[51]

Helen's final appearance in the *Iliad* comes in book twenty-four, as she gives a funeral lament for Hector which is the penultimate speech of the poem. Helen's lament is the last of three, following those of his wife and his mother, and it gives her a prominence in his funeral proceedings which is at odds with his somewhat cold reception of her speech in book six.[52] Pantelia argues that Helen's prominent position in the lamentation is not because of a hidden significance in her relationship with Hector, but because she is the only character who understands the importance of poetry in perpetuating heroic *kleos*.[53] We have already seen, in book six, that Helen has an unusual awareness of how her present suffering will be memorialised in song for future generations, and so her own song can be seen as the start of that process. Furthermore, in the context of the wider tradition, Helen has a unique significance not just to the war itself, but to the widespread destruction of the heroes. This means she is intimately linked to Hector's death in a way that surpasses the blood ties of his mother and the marriage ties of his wife. Murnaghan argues that there is a deep-seated association in the hexameter tradition between maternity and mortality[54] – as women are the ones who give birth to mankind, they are also somehow held responsible for their mortality,

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[51] For this encounter, see further Graziosi and Haubold (2010) 183-225. Hector and Andromache imagine opposing fates for their son after the death of his father, as I discuss in chapter 4 of this thesis.
[52] According to the motif of the ascending scale of affection, as formulated by Kakridis (1949) 21-4, the positioning of Helen's lament after those of his wife and mother suggest that she is the most closely related to him.
[53] Pantelia (2002) 21-7.
[54] Murnaghan (1992).

which is why the funeral lament is a genre dominated by the female.[55] For Helen, this makes particular sense. While it is not her fault that men are mortal, she is the cause of this war, and a tool for the destruction of the heroes. Her role as mother is not an important part of her Homeric characterisation, but it has proven her unremarkable mortality. The birth of her disappointing daughter in the *Catalogue* failed to create any of the cosmic consequences that might be expected from a grandchild of Zeus, and passes almost without comment in the tradition. Helen's prominent role at Hector's funeral reflects her traditional significance as the bringer of death; her lamentation demonstrates how little choice she has in that role.

As well as this wider significance, Helen's funeral lament is also interesting on the level of personal characterisation, as it continues the trend of her increasing feelings of self-hatred and shame which we had seen in her previous appearances. She begins her lament with an address to Hector, calling him "dearest by far to me of all my husband's brothers" (ἐμῷ θυμῷ δαέρων πολὺ φίλτατε πάντων 24.762). The term δαέρ, meaning specifically "husband's brother" is the same term of address she used to Hector in book six, and is itself suggestive of a close relationship, emphasised by Helen's qualification that he was the dearest to her of her husband's several brothers. She then goes on to emphasise her affection for him by claiming that he, along with Priam, was the only Trojan to treat her kindly (767-72), and now he is gone she is alone, with no-one else who treats her well (οὐ γάρ τίς μοι ἔτ᾽ ἄλλος ἐνὶ Τροίῃ εὐρείῃ / ἤπιος οὐδὲ φίλος 774-5). This expression of loneliness echoes that of Andromache in her lament (725-45), which throughout presents a picture of her desolate life without Hector. For Helen to see herself as bereaved as much as Hector's widow is disproportionate; she has two husbands still alive, and she has just admitted that Priam too is kind to her, so she is not alone after all. That she sees herself as such may tell us something of her inner state. Her isolation is not dependent on whether she actually has people who care for her, but is caused by her own self-hatred and shame. The mention of Hector and Priam together, as the two best men of Troy, reminds the audience that their connection is now broken, and father and son have been torn apart by a war over Helen. Helen's lament, which focuses solely on the loss of Hector in own life, demonstrates the extent of her self-involvement – even his wife and mother mention in their laments the impact on the city and the war, rather than just themselves. Helen's final words – that "all men shudder at me" (πάντες δέ με πεφρίκασιν 775) – do not match the impression given throughout the poem that

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[55] See Easterling (1991) on the strongly gendered nature of the funeral lament, and how this gives women a power which is unique to their sex.

Helen is accepted by the people around her, and instead suggest that she views herself from the perspective of the enemy.[56] Her final death-wish suggests a more profound isolation than either of her previous wishes. It seems that Helen's self-hatred and shame has increased rather than diminished over the course of the poem, and leaves her at the end of the poem with a sense of total psychological and genealogical isolation.

The self-hatred that was evident in Helen's death-wishes is also demonstrated by the words she uses to describe herself in the *Iliad* – specifically calling herself "dog" or "dog-face". We have already seen that she calls herself κυνώπιδος during the Teichoskopia when she identifies Agamemnon as her former brother-in-law (3.180); she also calls herself κυνός twice in her speech to Hector in book six (6.344, 356). This insult is used by other characters in the *Iliad*, but Helen is unique in using it against herself. Dog-metaphors (as distinguished from dog-similes) occur thirty-one times in Homer, and are the most common of all animal metaphors, but the precise meaning is not always clear – dogs can represent all kinds of behaviour, from greed and savagery, to the timidity and loyalty we now expect from domesticated dogs.[57] What is clear from all uses of this kind of insult is that it is "universally pejorative", and a uniquely harsh term to use against oneself. When applied to women in particular, it is usually understood to signify shamelessness.[58] When Helen uses this word, it does not seem to fit her behaviour in the poem, and Graver has argued that this marks the difference in portrayal of her character between this poem and other versions of the tradition.[59] Franco argues that dog insults have a particular complexity when used of women, and allude to the archetypal "dog-like" woman, Pandora.[60] They are therefore especially suitable for Helen to use against herself, if she sees herself as a similar kind of curse on mankind, as she is presented in the traditional narrative of the end of the heroes.

Helen's use of self-reflexive dog insults is emblematic of her presentation throughout the *Iliad*; her speech and actions demonstrate her to be profoundly isolated from those around her, and even from the family members who should be closest to her. She has a distant

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[56] Achilles calls her "shudder-inducing" (ῥιγεδανῆς) at 19.325, but this is representative of the view from the Greek side; the ambivalent attitude of the Trojans has been represented by the words of the elder at 3.156-60. Graver (1995) 53-9 argues that the *Iliad* does not present Helen as hated by the people, but that her own self-hatred reflects an alternative epic tradition, of which the poet is aware.

[57] Graver (1995) presents an analysis of the meaning of dog-metaphors in epic diction, and argues that they mean more than the usual gloss of "shameless"; they refer to a selfish material greed, manifested in behaviour such as eating too much, the taking of human life, sexual licentiousness, and even the possibility of cannibalism.

[58] Graver (1995) 44.

[59] Graver (1995) 53-9.

[60] Franco (2014).

perspective not just on current events, but on her whole existence, and is able to see her own actions and suffering in the context of wider history. This is isolating because such a perspective is not shared by other characters in the poem. However, it is consistent with her portrayal, elsewhere in the epic tradition, as the cause and instrument of the Trojan war. Her unique significance in this point of seismic change means she is separated from both her human and her divine family. This explains why she is so self-involved, ashamed, and detached from those around her. The *Iliad* therefore shows awareness of Helen's traditional role in cosmic history, and shows us how it has an effect on her emotions, psychological state, actions, and words. The Iliadic character is defined by her traditional role, but builds upon it to demonstrate the personal implications of cosmic history.

In the *Odyssey*, the portrayal of Helen seems at first to be significantly different from how she is presented in the *Iliad*; she is back where she belongs, in the palace she longed for in her first death-wish, and her interactions with her husband and their guests are superficially as cordial as those between the Phaeacian king and queen later in the poem.[61] However, a closer look at her appearance in book four, and her interactions with other characters, shows the same defining sense of isolation as was evident in the *Iliad*. In the final section of this chapter I explore how far the Helen of the *Odyssey* is characterised in the same way as she was in the *Iliad*, despite the great difference in context and tone between her appearances in the two poems, and consider the extent to which that consistency is shaped by her place in the traditional patterns of cosmic history.

Book four of the *Odyssey* opens with scenes of celebration at the Spartan palace, marking the marriages of Menelaus's two children, Hermione and Megapenthes. Although both weddings are apparently being celebrated with a feast in the palace (τὸν δ᾿ εὗρον δαινύντα γάμον πολλοῖσιν ἔτῃσιν / υἱέος ἠδὲ θυγατρὸς ἀμύμονος ᾧ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ 4.3-4), Hermione is in fact being sent away to the city of the Myrmidons for her wedding to Neoptolemus (8-9), while only Megapenthes' marriage will actually take place at home. It is not made clear whether Hermione has already left her parents, as she is not mentioned again after this brief introduction. It is also not stated that Helen and Menelaus are actually taking part in the celebrations, and when Helen arrives later in the scene she comes down from her

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[61] Schmiel (1972) argues that the episode in Sparta contains significant underlying tensions and sorrows, in contrast with the impressive appearance of the palace and its inhabitants; Sparta should be seen as a negative example of a domestic scene, with Pylos as a positive example.

quarters upstairs.[62] Clader suggests that this double wedding establishes "the aura of a fairy-tale" at the opening of this book, especially as Hermione is being given to the son of Achilles ("a princess marrying a prince").[63] Austin argues that marriage is the central theme of the *Odyssey*, as much as anger is for the *Iliad*, and interprets the Spartan weddings as a comical reflection of that theme; they are introduced as if they will be an important component of the following scenes, but do not have any relevance to the rest of the book.[64] It is certainly striking how little is made of Hermione in particular, and this may reflect on the characterisation of her mother. While it may have been expected for a daughter to travel to her husband's home for marriage (as Megapenthes' bride is being brought to the palace, 10-11), the result of Hermione's departure from home is that her importance in the household is diminished, despite being the only legitimate child. The lack of attention given to Hermione is consistent with Helen's apparent lack of concern for her in the *Iliad*. The role of mother is not an important aspect of Helen's characterisation in either poem.

When Hermione is mentioned at the beginning of the book, one interesting comment is made about her: she "had the appearance of golden Aphrodite" (εἶδος ἔχε χρυσέης Ἀφροδίτης 14). Hermione is the only character in Homer to have this said of her, although the same phrase is used of Helen in the *Catalogue of Women* (fr.M-W 196.5). That Hermione would be beautiful is not surprising, but this could have been effectively expressed with reference to her mother. If she "had the appearance of Helen" an audience would understand that she must be superlatively lovely. By choosing to attribute Hermione's beauty to Aphrodite instead of Helen, the poet neglects an opportunity to create a direct link between mother and daughter. The mention of Aphrodite may also remind an audience of the very close relationship Helen had with the goddess in the *Iliad*, which is not explicitly demonstrated in the *Odyssey*. That Hermione has been given her beauty directly from Aphrodite suggests a continued association with the goddess, extending to Helen's daughter as well as herself. However, such an association would not be entirely positive for Hermione. An audience familiar with the goddess's interaction with Helen as depicted in the *Iliad* would be well aware that being favoured by the goddess can make life miserable. If Hermione has the same beauty as her mother did, it may bring her the same strife. This brief mention of her

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[62] Schmiel (1972) 464-5.

[63] Clader (1976) 24. We can also see this as a continuation of the traditional association of Achilles and Helen as twin agents of the war, and of the preeminent examples of their sex.

[64] Austin (1991) 227-43.

beauty at the same time manages to minimise the connection between mother and daughter, and suggest that Hermione may suffer some of the same grief as her mother.

A similar effect can be seen in the mention of Menelaus' son, Megapenthes (11-2). Born to Menelaus from an unnamed slave-woman, Megapenthes is not related to Helen, but his name is suggestive of the darkness that lies beneath a seemingly joyful scene. It is noticeable in Homer that sons are named after an attribute of their father's, not their own – so "Astyanax" refers to Hector as lord of the city, and "Telemachus" to Odysseus' distance from home, or his prowess with a bow, shot from afar. Clader suggests that Megapenthes' name has the same purpose, as it represents the most distinctive characteristic of his father Menelaus.[65] The combination μέγα … πένθος ("great sorrow") is found seven times in Homer, when a person is overcome by their sadness, so his name is reflective of a fairly familiar phrase.[66] In the *Iliad*, Menelaus' great sorrow is easily attributed to Helen's abduction. We might expect that sorrow to be erased by the time the *Odyssey* finds the couple again at home together. However, Menelaus' sorrow as a bereft husband remains the defining aspect of his character, and the naming of his son reminds an audience of that, suggesting that such sorrow has continued even after their return home. Like the mention of Aphrodite, the presence of Megapenthes in this scene suggests a darker undertone to the scene in Sparta than is at first superficially apparent.

When Megapenthes is introduced at the beginning of the book, it is explained that he had been born to a slave-woman because the gods had given Helen no more children after Hermione (Ἑλένη δὲ θεοὶ γόνον οὐκέτ᾽ ἔφαινον, / ἐπεὶ δὴ τὸ πρῶτον ἐγείνατο παῖδ᾽ ἐρατεινήν 12-3). This may remind an audience of the anti-climactic nature of Hermione's birth in the *Catalogue of Women* – the *Odyssey* does not explicitly refer to that tradition, but it is consistent with her underwhelming fertility. Alternatively, for an audience unfamiliar with the Hesiodic tradition, it could be a generic expression of the gods as a deterministic force – simply that "it was not to be" for Helen to have more children. Either way, the family is disjointed, and Helen has failed to fulfil an important part of her role as wife. Menelaus has found it necessary to accept as legitimate a son by a slave-woman in order for his line to continue, and Helen will therefore have no blood connection to the next generation of the family in the palace.

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[65] Clader (1976) 30-1.
[66] *Il.* 1.254, 4.416, 7.124, 17.138; *Od.* 11.195, 17.489, 24.232.

As well as Helen's inability to produce a son, the scene of the wedding emphasises how Helen fails to fulfil the role of mother of her only daughter. A wedding, as a threshold in a girl's life when she is transferred to another family, is traditionally the moment when a mother's affection for her daughter is most heightened and emphasised. H. Foley argues that the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* dramatises the grief suffered by a mother on her daughter's marriage; Demeter's mourning for her daughter represents the intense emotional bond that would be expected to exist between mother and daughter.[67] However, Helen's relationship with Hermione does not fit that pattern. She does not seem to be present at the celebrations at the beginning of the book, and there is no hint that she is at all saddened by the marriage when she does appear. Hermione's marriage, mentioned so briefly and without any emotional affect on the mother, suggests that motherhood is not an important aspect of Helen's characterisation.

The scene of celebration which greets Telemachus and Peisistratus quickly fades away, and the rest of their time in Sparta is spent in conversation with Menelaus and Helen. As I discuss further in chapter 4, the purpose of Telemachus' visit is to learn about his father Odysseus, and so grow to be more like him, but equally as prominent in the whole episode is the relationship between Menelaus and his wife. Helen first appears after Menelaus has offered the customary hospitality to his guests, but his recollection of Odysseus leaves Telemachus in tears. Helen's entrance brings relief from the awkward pause when Menelaus inwardly debates how he should proceed. As she descends the stairs, accompanied by a handmaiden, Helen is likened to Artemis (122); this simile, used elsewhere of Nausicaa and Penelope,[68] seems like a deliberate distancing from her usual patron, Aphrodite, and encourages us to see this Helen in an altogether more chaste and domestic light than her Iliadic character. As she sits down to join her husband and his guests, the poet emphasises the luxury of the accessories she brings with her, in particular a distaff and sewing basket, in silver and gold, which had been a gift from guest-friends in Egypt (131-5). In general, Helen's entrance is in keeping with the awe-inspiring decor of the Spartan palace, which had led Telemachus to liken it to divine Olympus (71-5). She has an aura of divinity due to her

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[67] Foley (1993).
[68] Nausicaa at 6.102, 151-2, and Penelope at 17.37 and 19.54.

exquisite surroundings, but the domestic purpose of the distaff and basket cast her above all as a dutiful wife.[69]

We have seen that, in the *Iliad*, Helen is named as the daughter of Zeus at the specific moments when she is shown to be especially powerless and helpless. In the scene in the Spartan palace, divine epithets are again used at a memorable moment. After Helen has recognised Telemachus and remarked on his likeness to his father, the whole group succumbs to tears (4.183-6). When they begin eating again, Helen decides to prevent any more sorrow by putting a drug into each man's wine. The words used to describe this drug – νηπενθές, ἀχολόν, and ἐπίληθον (221) – each appear only here in Homer, giving it a unique and mysterious quality. These descriptions suggest it takes away sorrow, strife, and brings forgetfulness of all evils. Clader sees in the drug "a brief symbol for Homer's extended self-conscious expression of the effect of epic poetry".[70] The effects of this drug certainly seem similar to Hesiod's description of poetry as an antidote to πένθος (*Theog.* 98-103). However, the administering of the drug is not just metaphorical. The origin of the substance is explained (it had been brought from Egypt by Polydamna, 228-30), so we should understand that Helen really is intoxicating her guests with a material substance. Various explanations have been put forward for what kind of drug this description may refer to, including opium.[71] However, it seems unlikely that the poet was referring to an existing or known substance – the palace as a whole is described as being so beautiful as to be almost divine, and the origin of the substance from Egypt imbues it with a mystical quality.[72] Rather than trying to identify the drug itself, we should focus on the effects of the drug, and Helen's reasons for giving it to her husband and guests. As well as removing all sorrow and pain, the drug is capable of making a man completely impermeable to sadness, so that he would not weep even if his mother or father were to die, or if he saw his brother or son killed before his eyes (222-6). The resulting state would therefore be one devoid of emotion, leaving a person incapable of feeling any reaction to events happening around you – a complete psychological detachment. This kind of detachment is the same state that Helen seemed to experience in the *Iliad*, which enabled her to view events in her own life as if from the outside.

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[69] The image of Helen sitting in male company and busying herself with this domestic task is similar to how Nausicaa describes her mother Arete (6.305).
[70] Clader (1976) 33.
[71] Heubeck, West, Hainsworth (1988) 206-7.
[72] Egypt as a setting for fantastic events and characters is continued with Menelaus' meeting with Proteus there (*Od.* 4.462-569).

As Helen administers this drug, the poet gives her two different divine epithets in close succession: Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα ("born of Zeus" 219) and Διὸς θυγάτηρ ("daughter of Zeus 227). This latter epithet is most commonly associated with Aphrodite and Athene, particularly when they interfere in human affairs, either benevolently or malevolently.[73] This may suggest that Helen is here taking on a divine role, and she is indeed interfering with the emotional states of the men without their knowledge or permission. However, that she is using drugs to do so reveals her lack of real power, the kind of power that enabled Aphrodite to bend Helen to her will using only words in the *Iliad*.[74] Just as Helen was named as "daughter of Zeus" in the *Iliad* at a moment which emphasised her helplessness,[75] it is possible that this scene has a similar effect. When she administers the anti-sorrow drugs, something magical is suggested in her character, but in fact she has nothing like the influence that other daughters of Zeus can claim, such as Athene and Aphrodite. In contrast with their power, she is making use of eastern drugs, not as part of some great scheme, but to make her guests detached and emotionless. In the *Iliad*, Helen's distant perspective on her own life leads her to become isolated from those around her. In the *Odyssey*, she does not express this perspective in such a clear way, but the drug she gives to her guests is suggestive of being emotionally detached and cut off from the events she has caused. The divine epithets she is given as this point in the text may contribute to this effect, if we consider them in the light of her role in traditional cosmic history. As daughter of Zeus, and part of his plan to end the heroes, Helen is herself the cause of the overwhelming sorrow being suffered by Menelaus and their guests. Her use of the Egyptian drug to nullify that sorrow is all she is capable of doing in reparation, but she does not have the power to alter events any more than she did in the *Iliad*, in the midst of the war she had caused. Her status as daughter of Zeus is not a sign of her beauty or her privilege, but of her helpless position at the mercy of wider patterns of cosmic history.

Later in book four of the *Odyssey*, Menelaus does describe one significant privilege of Helen's divine parentage, but his focus is on what it means for himself rather than her. Having described his encounter with the shape-shifting seer Proteus in Egypt, Menelaus reveals what the seer had told him, including the location of Odysseus on Calypso's island

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[73] Clader (1976) 54.

[74] Her use of the drugs is perhaps more similar to the magic potions used by Circe for sinister means in book 5, but Helen's doping of her guests is less spectacular than Circe's shape-changing. The effect of Helen's drug is reminiscent of the powers of the lotus-fruit which is such a threat to Odysseus' men (9.96-7) which makes them forgetful of home.

[75] See above in this chapter, 109-11.

(4.555-60). Proteus' final prophecy was about Menelaus himself, and revealed that it is not his fate to die in Argos, but to be transported to the Elysian Field – "because you have Helen, and so you are son-in-law to Zeus" (οὕνεκ᾽ ἔχεις Ἑλένην καί σφιν γαμβρὸς Διός ἐσσι 569). The description of his existence in this place, where there is no snow, no strong winds, and no rain (566), echoes the description of Olympus later in the poem (6.43-5), but it is not suggested that he will actually become a god, or live among the gods. Neither is it explained whether Helen will join him in the Elysian Field, or whether as the daughter of Zeus she will enjoy an even better immortal existence. There is a possibility that Helen will have a different fate. Whatever that may be, it is surprising that while Menelaus' immortality is connected to his wife, he does not mention whether or not he will share it with her. Menelaus' attitude to his wife's divine heritage focuses on the benefits it incurs for himself, but Helen's silence at this point in this text may be suggestive of the more complex associations it brings for her. Even if Helen were offered a similar immortal existence, she does not boast about it. Perhaps it would be small compensation for the grief and destruction she has both caused and suffered as the daughter of Zeus.

Much discussion of the episode in the Spartan palace focuses on the two stories told by Menelaus and Helen, in which they each tell a memorable anecdote about Odysseus (4.240-89). The ostensible purpose of the stories is the same – to inform Telemachus of his father's great feats during the war. However, the two stories make an odd pairing, particularly in their depiction of Helen. Helen's story portrays herself as an Achaean supporter who aided Odysseus in his secret mission inside Troy, and Menelaus' tale paints her as a traitor who tried to foil the Greeks' plans with deception. A link may be found in that they both illustrate Helen's exceptional intelligence, although that intelligence is used to different ends in each story.[76] The location of each of the stories may be symbolic of their difference in meaning: Helen's story takes place within the palace, where she bathes and questions Odysseus, and so presents her as domesticated, whereas Menelaus describes her leaving the city walls to inspect the wooden horse, engaging in wider society and therefore breaking social convention.[77] It is possible that the poet put these two stories into the mouths of their tellers in order to reveal the dangers of a deceptive woman. Each of them could be a

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[76] Schmiel (1972) 470. Boyd (1998) argues that Helen's imitation of the Achaeans' wives, and the men's reactions to her, suggest that she has cast a spell on them, similar in form to the spell cast on Odysseus' men by Circe in *Odyssey* 10.
[77] When Hector is searching for Andromache in book six, the only places he imagines she could be are her own home, the homes of her relatives, or the temple of Athene (6.376-80); after their encounter on the walls, Andromache returns to her home (6.495-6).

warning to Telemachus about what his mother may do in his absence, or on his father's return.[78] However the two stories are to be interpreted, they function as separate parallels, not complementary parts of a whole, and the same could be suggested of Helen and Menelaus themselves. Helen and Menelaus seem to speak cordially to one another. She calls him "a husband lacking in nothing, neither in wisdom nor in looks" (πόσιν τε / οὔ τευ δευόμενον, οὔτ' ἂρ φρένας οὔτε τι εἶδος 263-4), and he compliments her on speaking properly (ναὶ δὴ ταῦτά γε πάντα, γύναι, κατὰ μοῖραν ἔειπες 266). However, these compliments are strikingly inappropriate to their gender. For Helen to mention her husband's good looks, unprompted and in male company, is unique in its boldness; no other woman in the poem utters similar words in such a context. Menelaus' compliment to her, that she has spoken well, would seem more appropriate if spoken to another man. As Telemachus rebukes his mother, speech is the domain of men (μῦθος δ' ἄνδρεσσι μελήσει / πᾶσι 1.358-9).[79] This suggests that even when Menelaus and Helen are behaving amicably, they do not behave appropriately. They are not fulfilling the expected roles of husband and wife.[80]

The unusual relationship between Menelaus and Helen is suggested once more in Helen's final appearance in the poem, when Telemachus and Peisistratus are preparing to leave Sparta. When the group sees an eagle fly past with a tame goose in its talons (15.160-4), Peisistratus asks Menelaus to interpret the omen for them. Menelaus, however, falls into the same private contemplation as he did when he first recognised Telemachus but was unsure whether to declare it, and it is Helen who steps in to proclaim a confident reading of the bird-sign. She correctly claims that Odysseus has already reached home and is planning vengeance on the Suitors, and so encourages Telemachus as he embarks on his own journey back to Ithaca. This reading of the omen not only gives Helen a more prominent role in Telemachus' departure than her husband, it also reveals the same unconventional dynamic between wife and husband. Helen is not afraid to speak out in male company, and when she does she shows a clear understanding of the will of the gods. Although there are similar instances of such bird-signs in the *Odyssey*, Helen's is the most confident and immediate interpretation of any them.[81] The distant, almost divine perspective which characterises

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[78] Olson (1989).

[79] See chapter 4 on Penelope and Telemachus for how we should understand this edict.

[80] Foley (1978) argued that the reverse similes used of Odysseus and Penelope evoke "an inversion of social roles or social themes" (7) – the interaction of Helen and Menelaus in book four seems to suggest a similar inversion.

[81] Similar signs involving eagles are seen at 2.153 and 20.242, but are not interpreted by the watching characters. Theoclymenus witnesses and interprets a bird-sign at 15.525-7, but his initial reading of it is vague. See Podlecki (1967).

Helen in the *Iliad* is thus channelled into a more positive use in the *Odyssey*, as her encouraging, and most importantly correct, reading of the omen serves the concerns of the poem as a whole. Helen may be a less prominent character in the action of the *Odyssey*, but her auxiliary roles – as hostess of Telemachus, educating him about his father, and offering an encouraging prophecy – still manage to reflect some of the detachment and otherworldliness of her Iliadic character.

The characteristics which define the Iliadic Helen at first seem to have evaporated by the time Telemachus meets her in the Spartan palace, but the same detachment and isolation are still present in the background throughout her appearances in the *Odyssey*. Nothing in the Spartan palace is as it first appears. The wedding of the two children, which could be such a joyful event, is forgotten as soon as new guests arrive. Helen does not seem to give a second thought to her only daughter, and the heir to the family is not even Helen's son anyway. The jovial dinner-party in which the hosts share stories with their hosts is in fact dominated by sorrow, only to be alleviated by the nullifying drugs of the hostess. The reunited husband and wife, holding court in their splendid home, each tell stories which contradict one another, and exchange compliments which are strikingly inappropriate in their context. Helen is no more part of a human family than she was in the *Iliad*, and she shows no sign of being any more emotionally engaged with her surroundings. The underlying tradition, of Helen as a unique and singular divine instrument, isolated by her function and place in time, is still implicitly present in the *Odyssey* despite superficial appearances.

While the Homeric poems do not make explicit allusions to the tradition, found in the Hesiodic *Catalogue* and the *Cypria*, that Helen is crucially linked to the destruction of the heroes, the studies of this chapter suggest that her Homeric characterisation does reflect it. As an instrument of Zeus' plan, Helen is unable to create any meaningful family relationships. She is therefore left genealogically isolated, and cannot fulfil the societal roles of daughter, sister, wife and mother. As a result, she feels detached from those around her, and expresses her self-hatred in her repeated death-wishes. The Homeric characterisation of Helen therefore gains its depth not only from within these two poems, but from the traditional narrative of cosmic history, and her position of unique significance within that narrative. Above in this chapter we saw that Helen occupies a liminal point in the text of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* – between the heroic genealogies that precede her marriage, and the cataclysmic strife of the gods, and description of the new human condition, that follow it. This liminality seems to be a consistent feature of Helen's characterisation throughout the

Homeric poems, too.[82] In the *Iliad*, she is neither Greek nor Trojan as both sides battle to possess her. Her lack of a child with Paris means she is not fully integrated into the Trojan family in the role of his wife, and the knowledge she displays in the Teichoskopia reveals both her familiarity with the Achaeans, and her separation from them. She is also suspended between the two worlds of gods and men. She has a close (if destructive) relationship with Aphrodite, and the poet reminds us that Zeus is her father, but she is still powerless even to control her own actions and the effect they have on others. In the *Odyssey* we can discern that Helen is not fully integrated into human society either. She fails as wife and mother, uses magic on her guests to prevent them from feeling sorrow, and her husband will not suffer mortal death because of her link with Zeus. Genealogically, geographically, sociologically, Helen does not fit in anywhere. Her Homeric characterisation – detached, self-involved, ashamed – is made necessary by this liminality. When we consider Helen in the context of traditional cosmic history, we find the consistency which underlies her characterisation not only in both Homeric poems, but across the hexameter tradition.

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[82] Suzuki (1989) 18-9 discusses the significance of Helen's liminality. A similar interpretation focuses on Helen's "doubleness" - see Bergren (1983) 80-3.

4: Penelope and Telemachus

In the previous chapters of this thesis, the *Iliad* has featured more prominently in my discussions than the *Odyssey*. In this chapter, I redress the balance by focusing exclusively on the latter poem. The two Homeric poems position themselves at separate but equally specific points in traditional history. In the *Iliad*, Achilles' anguish over his mortality is specific to his particular point in time – in accordance with his birth at the very end of the *Theogony* (1006-7), he is of the final generation who are born from gods and humans. In the *Odyssey*, such anguish would be misplaced. Odysseus actually refuses an offer of immortality from Calypso, and it is suggested that the Olympian gods would not allow such a transformation even though Calypso wishes it (5.116-144).[1] Nestor, rather than telling tales of his youth, when men were inherently stronger and greater than they are now, in the *Odyssey* harks back to the time of the Trojan war as long gone (3.254-328).[2] We have seen in the previous chapter that Helen's Homeric characterisation is reflective of her role in the traditional narrative of genealogical history, even though the poems do not explicitly refer to that wider narrative. In this chapter, I present an example of what happens when genealogical patterns of change, which structure the whole scope of traditional history, are frustrated. As I examine the characters of Penelope and Telemachus, it seems that this frustration forms a defining aspect of their presentation, as the inevitability of his maturation into manhood clashes with her constant struggle to prevent the progress which would preclude the successful return of Odysseus. The clash between these two characters is reflective of the tension which pervades the poem as a whole, between the two imperatives of traditional patterns of change on the one hand, and Odysseus' return on the other hand. My aim is to demonstrate how our understanding of these characters can be improved by considering them in the context of the traditional patterns of history which we have already seen to be reflected in the Homeric poems, and which are an integral part of the hexameter tradition as a whole.

In the *Odyssey* the normal patterns of small-scale genealogical change – from father to son, driven by procreation – have been brought to a halt, as if time has stood still in the

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[1] See Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 126-134 on Achilles and his specific point in time, and (134-47) comparing him with Odysseus. See also Slatkin (1991) on the significance of Achilles' parentage and place in his genealogical line.

[2] Dickson (1995) emphasises the unique position held by Nestor as a link to the past generation, and the way he uses storytelling to make use of the past for the narrative purposes of the present.

palace since Odysseus left.[3] However, we have seen from the arguments in part I of this thesis that the repeated patterns of history are an unstoppable force, which cannot be prevented or reversed even by the gods. As I explore in chapter 2, in the Hesiodic myth of divine succession, the inevitability of change results in a theme of the recurring tension between the male, who seeks to maintain supremacy, and the female, who favours change and drives procreation. Furthermore, the succession myth demonstrates that genealogical change and procreation are an essential part of human existence, and the problems that lie therein cannot be permanently solved for us as they have been in the divine realm. In the *Odyssey*, the problems faced by Penelope and Telemachus are ultimately problems of genealogical succession,[4] but the gendered divide between stability and change is reversed. If we read these characters in the context of traditional history, we can see how the narrative teases us with different possibilities, and illustrates the difficulties of their situation.[5] Ultimately, the poem asserts the narrative necessity of Odysseus' return over the human necessity of succession, and refuses to give us the answers we might expect. The traditional themes and patterns of change are made subservient to the concerns and priorities of an individual poem and its characters.

Early on in the *Odyssey*, it is suggested that normal succession will continue in the absence of Odysseus, against our expectations of his return. In book two, Telemachus follows the first of the instructions given to him by Athene in the previous book, and organises an assembly. Aegyptius, an elder who gives the opening speech, reveals that this is the first time an assembly has been called since Odysseus sailed away (2.26-7). He then praises whoever has called this meeting (33-4); he is glad that the long period empty of such meetings has ended. S. West surmises from this that "the poet regarded the institution [of assemblies] as peripheral to the political organisation of Ithaca".[6] However, the period since Odysseus' departure has been defined by an inversion of societal norms, exemplified by the behaviour of the suitors and their extreme disregard for the conventions of hospitality.[7] The fact that an assembly has not been held in the twenty years of Odysseus' absence does not

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[3] I explore how this impression is formed in the first section of this chapter.

[4] This is acknowledged by Murnaghan (1987), who describes the problems on Ithaca as "consequences of the passage of time" (15) and need to be returned to as they were before Odysseus' departure.

[5] This point has been made in a more general way by Richardson (2006), who argues that the narrator of the *Odyssey* deliberately misleads his audience in order to create an atmosphere of ambiguity and uneasiness throughout the poem.

[6] Heubeck, West, Hainsworth (1988) 131.

[7] According to Foley, Odysseus' absence caused "a disruption of normal economic, social and ethical relations on Ithaca" (1978) 8.

preclude their being an important component of normal civilised life on the island. Rather, the opposite is suggested; Aegyptius is responding with joy at the renewal of a vital institution. It seems that Telemachus is taking steps to restore order in Ithaca, and to do so he is preparing to take the place of his father.

That the assembly is a normal part of life is further suggested by the conventions by which it is called. The first few lines of book two, which describe the convening of the meeting, are similar to such scenes in the *Iliad* (2.50-2, 442-4), as a scholiast to the *Odyssey* points out (2.6-8).[8] The ease with which the meeting is announced and convened suggests that procedures are in place to enable this, even if they have not been used for twenty years. There is an agreed location for the meeting (ἀγορήν 10), and even allocated places to sit; Telemachus takes his father's seat in line 14, a clear indication that he is assuming the role formerly held by Odysseus. The use of the speaker's staff (37-8) bolsters this suggestion of conventionality. Overall, the scene creates the impression that all those present are well-acquainted with such occasions, even though they have not met in so long. We can infer that they must have been a regular component of life on Ithaca prior to Odysseus' departure. Without assemblies, the rhythms of civilised life have been halted, and society frozen at the moment Odysseus left. All this is to be expected in the absence of the island's leader, but what is surprising in this scene is that Telemachus seems to be preparing to succeed his father. In only the second book of the poem, the audience are faced with the possibility that the son will take the place of the father. Such succession follows the normal pattern of succession in a patriarchal society, but it is inconsistent with the theme of the *Odyssey*: Odysseus' return. An audience expecting to hear the story of the hero's *nostos* is being teased by the narrative possibility of that return being prevented. Odysseus cannot return to his position if his seat has already been taken by someone else. If Telemachus takes over supremacy in Ithaca, he will be a threat and a challenge to his father, not an ally. Early on in the poem, then, a tension is developing between normal genealogical succession on the one hand, and the return of Odysseus on the other hand. The poem struggles with which of these two options will prevail, as mother and son seem to favour opposing courses of action.

In the first book of the *Odyssey*, Penelope and Telemachus express opposing opinions of a song sung by Phemius. Their judgements can be read as critical appraisals of the performance itself, but they also reveal the different attitudes to change, and the passage of

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[8] Sch. *Od.*2.6a, in Pontani (2007).

time, held by mother and son. As Penelope descends the staircase, Phemius is singing for the Suitors, and his topic is described as "the sad homecoming of the Achaeans, caused by Athene when they left Troy" (ὁ δ᾽ Ἀχαιῶν νόστον ἄειδε / λυγρόν, ὃν ἐκ Τροίης ἐπετείλατο Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη 1.326-7). That the heroes of Troy have become the subject of song is suggestive of the long years that have passed since the expedition, and the great fame they have won themselves.[9] It is possible to see in Phemius' song the fulfilment of Helen's prediction to Hector, in book six of the *Iliad*, that their sufferings will make them worthy of the song of men to come.[10] However, it may seem jarring that this subject is sung in the very house of one of those heroes. This is because the song implies a finality, and completeness, in its subject. Although the Trojan war is recent history, the fact of its being monumentalised in song firmly classes it as a past event. That Phemius can sing a song with this subject implies that the homecoming of the Achaeans is complete; it has been definitively characterised as woeful (νόστον λυγρόν). No more happy homecomings can be added to it. Odysseus will not return to Ithaca.[11]

If we interpret the song in this way, we can sympathise with Penelope's objection to it. She tells Phemius to stop singing this "woeful song" (ἀοιδῆς / λυγρῆς 340-1), because it "always pains the heart in my chest" (ἥ τέ μοι αἰεὶ ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλον κῆρ / τείρει 341-2). Her objection to the song seems to arise from the disjuncture between its public performative aspect, and her own personal sorrow. She describes the song with the same adjective as was used to describe the Achaeans' homecoming, λυγρός, which creates alignment between the topic of the song and her direct reaction to it. She is literally sympathising with the suffering Achaeans, by suffering along with them. This intense emotional link to the subject of the song only makes sense if we infer that Odysseus is included in it, even if only implicitly. Furthermore, her use of the present tense (τείρει, "distresses, weakens, pains") emphasises that Odysseus' absence is a source of ongoing suffering for her, still happening now. Similarly, she says she suffers "sorrow not to be forgotten" (πένθος ἄλαστον 342)[12] and that she "always remembers" Odysseus' face (μεμνημένη αἰεί 343). This is suggestive not of

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[9] Biles (2003) 194.

[10] *Iliad* 6.357-8.

[11] Biles (2003) disagrees, arguing instead that Odysseus' absence from Phemius' song means "there is still some hope that he is alive, and as Telemachus goes off to visit Nestor and Menelaus he hopes to step forward beyond the reach of current song and find confirmation of this possibility" (197). However, he later claims that when Odysseus hears Demodocus sing about him, he weeps because "he has given up some portion of his own vitality", suggesting that being mentioned in song means you are no longer living (199-200).

[12] Although translators usually render ἄλαστον here as "unforgettable" or "beyond forgetting": see Lattimore (1965), Shewring (1980), Fagles (1996), Powell (2014), its etymology is uncertain and may not be connected to memory. *LFgrE* gives "heftig" (heavy, severe); its most common usage is with ἄχος or πένθος.

memorialising a past event, as Phemius' song does, but of a constant mindfulness of her sorrow, and the continuous presence of Odysseus in her mind. For Penelope, Odysseus still belongs in the present tense, not the past. This means that not only will she disapprove of Phemius' song, but of anything that places her husband in the past, such as the succession of the next generation. If Telemachus were to take his father's place, Odysseus would automatically be designated as the past generation, and her hope of his return would be untenable. H. Foley suggests that Penelope "freezes" her sexuality in Odysseus' absence;[13] the attitude she expresses in her objection to Phemius' song suggests that she attempts to freeze time altogether.

Telemachus' reply to his mother, and his opinion of Phemius' song, reflects a different attitude to the passage of time. Most interpretations tend to split this speech into two sections, with the first half expressing his attitude to the song, and the second half asserting his maturity and authority over his mother. However, if we read the speech as a whole, both halves demonstrate his attitude to change and progress, and show his difference from his mother. It is the first part of Telemachus' speech which demonstrates his attitude to Phemius' song. He defends the choice of subject by saying that audiences prize novelty in the songs they hear (351-2), and so the bard should have freedom of choice (346-7). His advocacy of novelty reminds us of his youth; it is perhaps natural for the young to prefer the newest song rather than the stories of the distant past. Furthermore, Phemius is not to blame for the evils suffered by the Trojans – that is Zeus (348-9, recalling Helen's prediction in the *Iliad*). West calls Telemachus' defence of the bard "the earliest literary criticism in Greek literature",[14] and de Jong reads it as "an indirect advertisement for the *Odyssey* itself, which will offer an even newer *nostos* story".[15] However, a further meaning is detected when we read his defence of the bard together with the rest of his reply.

In the second half of the speech, Telemachus responds rather bluntly to Penelope's description of her sorrow, telling her to "endure" or "submit" to listening (ἐπιτολμάτω ... ἀκούειν 353), and denying her the unique sorrow that she claimed for herself in line 342 by reminding her that many others died at Troy (354-5). He closes his speech by telling her to return upstairs and attend to the women's work of weaving, and to leave "speech" (μῦθος 358) to the men. These final lines (356-9) were athetised by Aristarchus and have been

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[13] Foley (1978) 16.
[14] Heubeck, West, Hainsworth (1988) 119.
[15] de Jong (2001) 38.

doubted by others who judge this formula to be less appropriate here than it is in its other instances.[16] In the *Iliad*, the same formula is used by Hector when he tells Andromache that war is the concern of men, and especially for him – she should return to her rooms and her womanly tasks (*Il.* 6.490-3). It is also used twice more in the *Odyssey*, once when Alcinous tells his wife Arete that the transportation of Odysseus will be the concern of men (*Od.* 11.252-3); and for a second time by Telemachus, when he tells Penelope to leave the men to the contest of the bow, for it is the concern of men, and especially for him as master of the house (23.350-3). In contrast with the pathos and tragic foreshadowing of Hector's use of the formula, the other instances of the formula are sometimes seen as less appropriate, and Telemachus' first use of it here seems to be less powerful. Does it even make sense to say that "speech" (μῦθος) is the sole concern of men, when throughout the poem we see compelling instances of women speaking in mixed company and being accepted?[17]

S. West calls this part of Telemachus' speech "adolescent rudeness".[18] According to Katz, Telemachus' words have "the brash authority of a character who speaks for the poet",[19] and Felson explains his attitude to his mother as "characteristically adolescent abruptness".[20] Clarke goes so far as to call his first attempt at authority a "fiasco", saying that he "shocks Penelope quite unnecessarily, even cruelly".[21] Contrastingly, Clark argues convincingly that the use of μῦθος in the Homeric poems marks it as a particularly male type of speech, in contrast with the unmarked ἔπος, which can be used by both men and women.[22] In this interpretation, Telemachus' comments on μῦθος are revealed as his attempt to enter the heroic world of his father, a world from which his mother must be excluded. Furthermore, I would argue that the use of this formula (that "something" is the concern of men, and especially for me, and women should return to their duties) three times in the *Odyssey* is evidence that this is an accepted and appropriate way to speak to female members of the family, in order to assert the different roles of men and women. The scene between Hector and Andromache has overshadowed all these other uses of the formula, because their meeting is so emotive. Rather than viewing the other uses of the phrase as inappropriate, we should

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[16] *Iliad* 6.490-3, and *Odyssey* 11.352-3 and 21.350-3.

[17] The most prominent examples of women who speak in mixed company are Helen (in book four) and Arete (in books seven and eight); both of these women are exceptional – see the argument of Clark (2001) as discussed below.

[18] Heubeck, West, Hainsworth (1988) 120.

[19] Katz (1991) 20.

[20] Felson (1994) 77.

[21] Clarke (1967) 32.

[22] Clark (2001). His arguments are informed by the earlier work of Martin (1989).

recognise that this is a fairly regular way of addressing female members of the household. Telemachus is not being rude to his mother; he is attempting to fulfil the role of master of the house. Although Penelope is shocked by his assertiveness, she does as he says, and silently returns upstairs, pondering "the wise words of her son" (παιδὸς γὰρ μῦθον πεπνυμένον ἔνθετο θυμῷ 361). The description of Telemachus' speech as "wise" (πεπνυμένον) gives him implicit approval from the poet, focalised through his mother.

Telemachus is therefore behaving in an appropriate way when he defends Phemius' song and tells his mother to stop interfering. However, there is more to his speech than these two separate purposes. Read as a coherent whole, his speech reveals and enacts his attitude to the passing of time, which is completely at odds with the attitude of his mother. Penelope does not like the topic of this new song because it makes it impossible for Odysseus to return to her; similarly, she has not encouraged Telemachus to take his father's place because that would also preclude his returning. Telemachus, on the other hand, praises novelty in the song precisely because he now sees the possibility of taking Odysseus' place. Telemachus' speech as a whole shows his attitude to change and progress. Just as an audience will not listen to the old songs forever, neither can the head of a household expect to hold power indefinitely. He praises Phemius for singing a new song, and then offers a novel performance himself, by asserting that he has the authority to succeed his father. After the encouragement of Mentes, it seems that Telemachus feels ready to take on this new role. His travels to Pylos and Sparta in the next three books enable him to grow to maturity in a safe space away from the Suitors, but when he returns, Odysseus is back on Ithaca, and Telemachus' journey to manhood is stopped in its tracks.[23] Telemachus' travels ensure he becomes just enough of a man to help his father, but not enough to take his place.[24] This tension is a result of the clashing imperatives present in the poem as a whole: time must keep marching on and so Telemachus must grow older, but Odysseus must return and be able to regain his old place in the house.

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[23] Murnaghan (1987) expresses the difficulties of Telemachus' situation and conditions of development; he must show himself to be worthy of his father's inheritance by growing to maturity in his absence, but cannot actually succeed him before his return. Murnaghan calls the poem a "celebration of inherited excellence" (34), but no process of inheritance is actually reflected in the poem; see below for how the poem ignores or even denies the possibility of Odysseus' eventual succession by Telemachus.

[24] Recent interpretations of Telemachus' character focus on his development throughout the poem, and point out the importance of this careful balance: Murrin (2007) focuses on the role of Athene in turning "a boy into an adult" (501); Beck (1998) and Heath (2001) analyse Telemachus' speech-introductions and epithets respectively, to show how the poet charts his development into a suitable ally for Odysseus; Gottesman (2014) focuses on the question of authority and argues that Telemachus' exercise of authority in Ithaca prepares the way for his father, but his interpretation does not take into account the possibilities for inter-generational conflict that this entails.

Before the confrontation with his mother over Phemius' song, Telemachus had been presented in his first appearance in book one as an inactive figure, incapable of taking the necessary action to save his household. This first scene is important for the characterisation of Telemachus, as it helps us to understand how his inaction against the Suitors, and his despondency, has been caused by the prolonged absence of Odysseus. We first meet Telemachus in the main room of the palace, sitting among the suitors but isolated in his thoughts. As he sits, he imagines his father returning to destroy the suitors and winning honour for himself (1.115-7). This violent daydream contrasts with Telemachus' actual passivity, and suggests that he does not see himself as capable of enacting what he imagines his father doing. When Athene arrives at the palace in the form of Mentes, Telemachus does demonstrate awareness of the conventions of *xenia* – he sees it as shameful (νεμεσσήθη 119) for a stranger to be left waiting at the door. His reception of Mentes demonstrates that he has a sense of duty, and allows him to be cast in the role of host.[25] However, it is still clear that he is not in charge of the household; although he has been absent for so long, Odysseus' dominion over the house is suggested by his spears which still stand in their rack (126-7). These symbols of male strength are left unused – it has apparently not occurred to Telemachus that he may be capable of using them in the way he imagined in his daydream, and the suitors must not have any such concerns either.[26] After the conventional scene of hospitality (136-43), the bard Phemius begins to sing and Telemachus takes the opportunity to speak privately with his guest. His speech begins with an apology for the behaviour of the suitors, but he justifies it by the absence of his father. He makes it clear that he considers Odysseus dead – he imagines his remains lying somewhere (161-2) – but his earlier daydream suggests that he harbours some hope that Odysseus may yet return. The responsibility on Telemachus would be greater if he did believe Odysseus to be dead, as in that case he would be obliged to take his place as head of the household. However, his apology to Mentes demonstrates that he does not even consider it possible to stand up to the suitors himself. It therefore seems likely that Telemachus fervently hopes that Odysseus is still alive and will return, but he cannot articulate that hope; as Austin argues, he "disguises

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[25] Katz (1991) 121-2 argues that Telemachus is unable to provide *xenia* to guests until he has been reunited with Odysseus in book sixteen; this is based on her argument that *kleos* in the *Odyssey* is concomitant with *xenia*. It is true that he tells Eumaeus that he could not guarantee the safety of the beggar-Odysseus, before he knows who he is, but that is more a reflection of the beggar's vulnerable state, and the Suitors' uncontrollable behaviour. He surely provides full *xenia* to Mentes in book one – though ashamed of the Suitors' behaviour, he is not afraid that they will challenge his hospitality to the visitor.

[26] The spear as a symbol of particularly masculine violence can also be seen in *Iliad* 6.318-24, where Hector's entrance, with spear, into Paris' rooms contrasts with his brother's leisurely contemplation of his bow and shield. See Graziosi and Haubold (2010) 167-9.

his real hopes behind the protective facade of resignation".[27] So while Telemachus remains inactive, and does not attempt to succeed his father, because he hopes for Odysseus' return, he makes clear to Mentes that he believes his father to be dead; which, if it were true, would require him to take action himself to reclaim the household.

Mentes then prophesies that Odysseus will return soon (he is still alive but being held captive, 196-205), and begins his encouragement of Telemachus by telling him how he resembles Odysseus: he is tall (αὐτοῖο τόσος 207), and his head and eyes are terribly similar (αἰνῶς μὲν κεφαλήν τε καὶ ὄμματα καλὰ ἔοικας / κείνῳ 208-9). These compliments seem intended to stir up Telemachus' courage, and incite him to emulate his father in character too. Telemachus' reply – that his mother tells him he is Odysseus' son, but no-one can be entirely sure of their own parentage (215-6) – is surprising in its diffidence, as he is in fact acknowledging that he has no direct connection with his father, and the gap between them cannot be bridged by his mother. In the whole of this first conversation with Mentes, Telemachus never names Odysseus as his father, which is suggestive both of his lack of knowledge of him, and his uncertainty of his own identity.[28] His distancing of himself from his father may remind us of Diomedes' claim, in the *Iliad*, that he has no memory of his father Tydeus (6.222-3). As we saw in chapter 2, Diomedes' purpose is to emphasise to Glaucus his peaceful intentions rather than emulating the violent recklessness of his father.[29] In the case of Telemachus, his "forgetting" of Odysseus is not a diplomatic decision, but a justification for his inaction thus far, and it suggests the great difficulties of growing up without a father. We can look to the *Iliad* for a sharp depiction of what it means for a boy to be fatherless, in the contrasting futures that are imagined for Astyanax by his parents. In book six, at the close of his emotional encounter with Andromache, Hector takes his son into his arms and imagines for him a glorious future: like Hector, he will be preeminent amongst the Trojans (476-8), and one day someone will even say of him that he is better than his father (479).[30] That this is an "impossible vision"[31] is shown by the very different future imagined for the boy by his mother in book twenty-two, immediately after she has heard of Hector's death. The picture presented by Andromache is of poverty and dependency – others will take away the boy's lands (22.489), he will be cut off from his friends (490), and he will

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[27] Austin (1969) 59-60.
[28] Clarke (1967) 32; Stanford (1958 vol.I) 222
[29] See chapter 2, 91-2; Graziosi and Haubold (2010) 140; Barker and Christensen (2011).
[30] On this passage see Graziosi and Haubold (2010) 46-7, 213-9.
[31] Graziosi and Haubold (2010) 47. As Katz (1981) 34 points out, both parents know that this future will not come to pass, as they each realise the inevitability of Trojan defeat.

have to beg from the friends of his father at a feast (492-5).[32] Andromache's vision is much more pragmatic than Hector's. Without a father, it is suggested, a boy has no claim for position or honour, and other people of rank reject him. A significant aspect of being fatherless is therefore the loss of inheritance and property, which is exactly what Telemachus fears from the Suitors.[33] When Telemachus wishes that he had a father who would grow old among his possessions (*Od.* 1.218), his own inheritance of those possessions is implied; security of property and patrimony are important symbols of genealogical continuity.

Telemachus' words and behaviour in this first part of the conversation have revealed the conflict within his character. He cannot emulate his father because he does not know him; he hopes for his return but hides that hope by speaking surely of his death; he is no longer a child, and mature enough to act as host, but he makes no attempt to succeed his father and protect his household. This conflict is a result of his age, on the cusp of manhood but still in the transitional phase of adolescence.[34] This difficult stage in life is reflected in the state of limbo which has come to pass in the household in its master's unexplained absence – the gods "have made him to disappear from sight like no other man" (οἳ κεῖνον μὲν ἄιστον ἐποίησαν περὶ πάντων / ἀνθρώπων 235-6), he is "gone from sight and hearing" (οἴχετ᾽ ἄιστος ἄπυστος 242). It would be better, Telemachus says, if Odysseus had died at war, or in the arms of his friends, for then a tomb could be made for him, and he would have "great glory, for his son too, in days to come" (ἠδέ κε καὶ ᾧ παιδὶ μέγα κλέος ἤρατ᾽ ὀπίσσω 240). Instead of that glory, all that is left for Telemachus is "anguish and weeping" (ἐμοὶ δ᾽ ὀδύνας τε γόους τε / κάλλιπεν 242-3), as the suitors pursue his mother and ruin his house (248). His mother, furthermore, "neither refuses a hateful marriage, or makes a final decision" (ἡ δ᾽ οὔτ᾽ ἀρνεῖται στυγερὸν γάμον οὔτε τελευτὴν / ποιῆσαι δύναται 249-50), so all parties are left deadlocked, and no change can occur until one of them takes decisive action. Such a

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[32] Aristarchus athetised these lines, apparently because he could not understand how such a future would await any prince of a royal house (Sch. 22.487 Arn-A); the removal of the lines is supported by Wilamowitz (1916) and von der Mühll (1952). Katz (1981) defends the lines; although they may depict an improbable circumstance, they reflect Andromache's "psychologically realistic despair" (37). The passage is defended by Richardson (1993). The image of Astyanax being forced to beg from the table contrasts with Andromache's memory of Hector feeding him only the best fat and marrow, but also with the image of surrogate fatherhood presented by Pheonix in his reminiscences of Achilles' childhood, whom he used to feed from his knee (9.485-91).

[33] See Redfield (1994) 110-3 on the significance of successful inheritance between father and son and the continuity and stability it brings. Leaving fatherless children is one of the ways in which the warrior obituaries are imbued with pathos, according to Griffin (1980) 103-43; but here the imagery is not developed, and seems to be part of a larger motif of leaving behind families and homes, including parents, wives and children.

[34] Alden (1987) notes the parallels to the *Odyssey*'s domestic plot in other traditions and argues that Telemachus' adolescence marks him out as an anomaly – he can even be seen as an "embarrassment to the story" because his age prevents the Suitors from eliminating him as they would an infant, but he is not yet old enough to eliminate them.

situation would have been preferable when Telemachus was still a child, and therefore incapable of action. That he now recognises the difficulty of the situation, and the need for change, is a sign that he has reached an age when he is capable of instigating progress. Without a father to learn from, however, he needs the guidance of Mentes to do so. When Mentes has advised Telemachus on how to proceed, Telemachus thanks him for speaking "like a father to his son" (ὥς τε πατὴρ ᾧ παιδί 308), acknowledging that he had until now been in need of paternal advice.

The most significant of Mentes' instructions to Telemachus concern the voyage he is to take. At its most immediate level, his travels to Pylos and Sparta allow Telemachus to take on the role of seafarer and visitor to foreign lands, roles which define his father from the first lines of the proem (1.3-5).[35] It is clear in the poem that Telemachus has never undertaken such a trip before, and Eurycleia's shock and dismay at his plan suggest that he has never even left Ithaca (2.363-370). His experience of sea travel, though on a much smaller scale than Odysseus' wanderings, provides some shared experience between father and son. From an audience's perspective, hearing about Telemachus' voyage is proleptic of Odysseus' greater voyage that they will hear of later in the poem.[36] Once again, the narrative surprises us by foregrounding the deeds of Telemachus over those of his father. In the proem the audience were promised they would hear about Odysseus' travels to many places, the many people he met, and the many sorrows he suffered (1.1-5), but instead the poem's focus has been on Ithaca: first Telemachus threatened to take his father's place in the household and the assembly, and now he is performing the role normally reserved for Odysseus. As we hear about Telemachus' travels, and then the lengthier adventures of Odysseus, the generational order is reversed. By the end of the poem, Odysseus' deeds are given prominence, and those of Telemachus recede into the background, emphasising that Odysseus is the rightful leader,

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[35] Gottesman (2014) argues that the travels of Telemachus are an important way in which he gains the authority he will need in order to help Odysseus on his return: he must show capability in the three social practices of marriage, travel and hospitality in order to represent the full extent of his father's authority. A problem with this interpretation is that it does not consider the possible consequences of Telemachus taking on this power, as it threatens to bring about conflict between father and son on Odysseus' return. Jones (1988) emphasises that the purpose of Telemachus' travels is to gain a good reputation among others, which entails gaining knowledge of his father and demonstrating his similarity to him. Murnaghan (1987) 34-6 argues that Telemachus' travels allow him to regain his own identity based on that of his father, but without depending on his father's presence.
[36] Austin (1975) 182-6 emphasises the ways in which Telemachus' travels give him experiences parallel to those of his father. Eckert (1963) argues that Telemachus' travels incorporate motifs of male initiation rites.

but at the expense of genealogical continuity.[37] The incompatibility of succession and return are thus reflected in the structure of the poem.

Telemachus' visit to Nestor at Pylos succeeds in assuring Telemachus that he is like his father, and capable of emulating him. When they first meet, Nestor momentarily seems to doubt that this is the son of Odysseus before him, saying "if indeed you are his son" (εἰ ἐτεόν γε / κείνου ἔκγονός ἐσσι 3.122-3), but then immediately confirms it because of their similarity – "your speech could not be more like his" (ἦ τοι γὰρ μῦθοί γε ἐοικότες 124). It is fitting that the resemblance noticed by Nestor, the most loquacious of Homeric characters, is the speech of the two men, and he is confident of Telemachus' paternity because of their verbal resemblance. Nestor goes on to describe the harmonious relationship he had with Odysseus, again in the context of public speaking: "Odysseus and I never spoke against each other either in the assembly or in the council" (ἔνθ᾽ ἦ τοι ἧος μὲν ἐγὼ καὶ δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς / οὔτε ποτ᾽ εἰν ἀγορῇ δίχ᾽ ἐβάζομεν οὔτ᾽ ἐνὶ βουλῇ 126-7). Nestor's confidence in his own authority means that this description suggests admiration as well as harmony between the two men; if Odysseus always agreed with Nestor, he must also be a very wise man.

In his exhortation of Telemachus, Nestor invokes the example of Orestes, who has already avenged himself against his father's killers. The story of Agamemnon and his house is a thread which runs throughout the *Odyssey*, and the significance and purpose of the various retellings of the story differ according to their context.[38] In this case, however, there are several ways in which Nestor makes the story relevant to Telemachus' particular situation. When he initially mentions Orestes, he draws a moral from his actions: "Thus it is a good thing for a son to be left behind after a man's death" (ὡς ἀγαθὸν καὶ παῖδα καταφθιμένοιο λιπέσθαι / ἀνδρός 196-7). The vengeance of Orestes shows the importance of succession, and specifically the crucial role which can be played by a male heir. As Mentes did in the first book, Nestor is exhorting Telemachus to be more active in his father's

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[37] Murnaghan (1987) 36-7 describes Telemachus' situation as a suspension of his maturity, dramatised in the contest of the bow when he nearly strings the bow but submits to his father.

[38] References to the story of Agamemnon's murder and Orestes' revenge occur at 1.35-43, 298-300; 3.193-98, 234-35, 255- 312; 4.90-92, 512-37, 546-47; 11.387-89, 409-34, 452-53; 13.383-84; 24.19-22, 96-97, 199-200.The importance of the Oresteia references was brought to prominence by D'Arms and Hulley (1946). Hainsworth, in Heubeck, West and Hainsworth (1988), sees the purpose of Agamemnon's story as an example of the worst possible consequences of a situation like that on Ithaca. The variety and complexity of the different versions told by each character is brought out by Olson (1990), who argues that the poet uses the story to "deceive, mislead, frighten and intrigue his audience" (57) by presenting possible alternatives to the traditional return and revenge of Odysseus, and reflecting on the complex relationship between the poet, his story and his audience. See also Nieto Hernández (2002), who focuses on the significance of the specific parallels between the figures of Agamemnon and Odysseus.

defence. After Telemachus has asked to hear the story in more detail, Nestor includes two further lessons which are relevant to the Ithacan situation. First, he asserts that events would not have unfolded as they did had Menelaus returned home sooner; if he had found Aegisthus in the place of his brother, the adulterer would have had a bad death for what he had done (256-61). This impresses upon Telemachus the need for urgency, in his own return to Ithaca, and the return of his father. In Nestor's portrayal, Aegisthus is undoubtedly the initiator of wrongdoing. Clytemnestra at first resisted his words "for she had an understanding heart" (φρεσὶ γὰρ κέχρητ᾽ ἀγαθῇσι 266), but was eventually won over after Aegisthus had removed from the palace the singer left by Agamemnon to guard his wife (267-75). The second lesson for Telemachus is therefore that even a noble woman can be won over in time, and the possibility is presented to him that his own mother could still be persuaded by one of the Suitors. Just as his performance in the assembly of book two had presented the possibility that Telemachus would take his father's place before he could return, here the audience are invited to imagine that Telemachus will emulate Orestes, taking revenge on his father's enemies single-handed, and therefore rendering the return of Odysseus himself unnecessary, or even impossible.[39] The character of Telemachus again threatens to disrupt the traditional return of Odysseus.

After his dialogue with Nestor, Telemachus' visit to Pylos seems to have already fulfilled its aim. However, the scenes Telemachus will witness during his overnight stay in the palace serve his purposes further. This is because Nestor lives in a well-ordered household, where he sleeps beside his wife at night (402-3), and in the morning descends to sit on his ancestral throne (404-8). This seat provides a clear image of patrilineal succession: Neleus sat there before him, and around him are gathered his sons who will take his place after him (408-16). Pylos is also a place where religious observance is of great importance; sacrifices are being performed even as Telemachus arrives at the shore (5-6), and Nestor gives orders for an elaborate sacrifice on the morning of Telemachus' departure (418-29). Pylos is presented as a pious and well-ordered household, with the royal family at the centre, and so to Telemachus it provides an ideal example of how Ithaca should be. However, Pylos is not a typical example of a household because Nestor is not a typical patriarch, due to his exceptional age. Already in the *Iliad* he was revered as by far the eldest of the leaders, and

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[39] This is one example of how the Oresteia story is used by the poet to tease his audience with alternative possibilities, as brought out by Olson (1990); Richardson (2006) argues that it is a prominent feature of the *Odyssey* narrator that he tries to "deceive" his audience by presenting numerous potential ways in which events could unfold.

his reminiscences of the past frequently suggest that he really belongs to another age.[40] We might expect that he would by now have yielded power to his younger sons, but he still remains unchallenged. The *Theogony* has illustrated that it is unwise for men to try to maintain power indefinitely, so we are left with the question of whether this will cause problems in Pylos. The picture of Nestor's unrelenting power may also be proleptic of how Odysseus will behave at the conclusion of the poem, when, as we shall see, no suggestion is given that he will relinquish power to his young son.

When Telemachus, now accompanied by Peisistratus, arrives at Sparta, a scene greets the two young men which seems at first to be suggestive of an idealised household like that at Pylos. The two weddings of Hermione and Megapenthes are being celebrated with a lavish feast at the palace of Menelaus (τὸν δ᾽ εὗρον δαινύντα γάμον πολλοῖσιν ἔτῃσιν / υἱέος ἠδὲ θυγατρὸς ἀμύμονος ᾧ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ 4.3-4), but what should be a joyous occasion is tainted by suggestions of disharmony. Megapenthes, whose very name is a reminder of the "great sorrow" his father has suffered in the past, is not the son of Menelaus' wife Helen, but of an unnamed slave woman. Helen's daughter Hermione is being sent away to marry Achilles' son, but her mother does not seem to be present to wish her well. It is not even clear from the text that Menelaus and Helen are part of the celebrations at all – only the neighbours and family of Menelaus are described as enjoying the feasting and entertainment (15-6). The two weddings may remind Telemachus and Peisistratus that they themselves are of an age to marry, but after this scene has opened the book, the weddings are not mentioned again. The scene of a stable, happy family fades quickly once the two visitors enter the palace, and they spend their time at Sparta in conversation with Menelaus and his wife, whose words and actions are suggestive of a more dysfunctional family home.[41]

After the usual scene of hospitality, Menelaus and Helen recognise Telemachus as Odysseus' son without any introduction. When Helen comes down from her upstairs quarters, on seeing Telemachus she declares "I have never yet seen one so like another, neither man nor woman ... as he is like the son of great-hearted Odysseus" (οὐ γάρ πώ τινά φημι ἐοικότα ὧδε ἰδέσθαι / οὔτ᾽ ἄνδρ᾽ οὔτε γυναῖκα ... ὡς ὅ᾽ Ὀδυσσῆος μεγαλήτορος υἷι ἔοικε 141-3). Menelaus agrees with his wife, saying that Telemachus' feet, hands, eyes, head and hair are all like Odysseus' were (149-50). This list of similarities makes it clear to Telemachus that he is very much like his father in appearance, and so makes it seem more

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[40] As we are told at *Il.* 1.250-2, this is the third generation of men that Nestor has known.
[41] See chapter 3, 119-24.

possible for him to emulate him in behaviour too. Menelaus also notes Peisistratus' similarity to his father Nestor, especially in his eloquent speech (206). He then alludes to the stability of Nestor's household with a generalisation about the importance of marriage and procreation: "Easily known is the man to whom the son of Kronos spins good fortune in his marriage and begetting" (ῥεῖα δ' ἀρίγνωτος γόνος ἀνέρος ᾧ τε Κρονίων / ὄλβον ἐπικλώσῃ γαμέοντι τε γεινομένῳ τε 207-8). Here, γεινομένῳ can be understood to mean "at birth" or "at begetting". M. West judges the former to be correct,[42] but the latter makes more sense in this context; Menelaus is praising Nestor for having excellent sons who will give him happiness in old age (209-11). Moreover, the begetting of children is the expected consequence of marriage (γαμέοντι), so the two thoughts follow a logical progression. Menelaus, whose only son is illegitimate and named "Great Sorrow", is aware of the unhappiness caused by being without legitimate sons, and so his speech displays the envy he feels for Nestor's situation. His assessment suggests that stable succession of fathers by sons, as exemplified by Nestor's family, is a blessing from Zeus. When it is disrupted or frustrated as it is in the palace at Sparta, it causes pain and sadness.

In book four, as Helen and Menelaus each tell their own story about Odysseus, and in the process reveal much about their own dysfunctional relationship, Telemachus is presented with a picture of failed genealogical succession. As I argue in my previous chapter, Helen is unable to fulfil the important role of the mother in continuing her line; this is why Menelaus has as his heir an illegitimate child, and perhaps also the reason for her apparent lack of interest in her own daughter's wedding. The weddings at the opening of the book seem to be showing us normal human life, revolving around the milestones of birth, marriage and death, but that impression of normality disappears after the first twenty lines. The poem therefore shows awareness of traditional patterns of genealogical change, but is more concerned with what happens when they are distorted or skewed. Telemachus' travels to both Pylos and Sparta have both featured an apparently stable family which seems to follow the rules of human succession, but which is then revealed to be anything but normal. This theme extends to Odysseus' travels, too: the Phaeacians only marry other Phaeacians, with no consideration of exogamous unions which would expand their territory; the family of Aeolus intermarry sons with daughters. These are subtler examples of the poem's depiction of "otherness", most obviously demonstrated in the Cyclopes, who have no human society or civilisation.[43]

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[42] Heubeck, West, Hainsworth (1988) 206.

[43] The most extensive treatment of Odysseus' travels and their significance to the poem is Dougherty (2001).

By contrast, these foreigners seem to show the normality and idealism of Ithaca, but even in the palace of Odysseus we are refused a picture of the normal patterns of genealogical history. One example of how this is done is the family trait of only sons.

It is an essential fact of the *Odyssey* that Telemachus is the only son of Odysseus. He comments on this fact to his disguised father in book sixteen, explaining that the situation with the suitors has arisen because he has no brothers to help him against them. Not only is he a single son, but so were his father and grandfather:

> ὧδε γὰρ ἡμετέρην γενεὴν μούνωσε Κρονίων·
> μοῦνον Λαέρτην Ἀρκείσιος υἱὸν ἔτικτε,
> μοῦνον δ᾽ αὖτ᾽ Ὀδυσῆα πατὴρ τέκεν· αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
> μοῦνον ἔμ᾽ ἐν μεγάροισι τεκὼν λίπεν οὐδ᾽ ἀπόνητο.

16.117-20.

The repetition of μοῦνον ("alone", "only") at the beginning of three consecutive lines emphasises the single son in each generation, and the importance of this fact is stressed by its being fated, as it has been Zeus' decision that there should be only one son in each generation. This level of detail is not narratively necessary, and so this emphasis on the singularity of Odysseus' family line suggests that it has significance beyond this particular context. As Telemachus is speaking to his disguised father, it is ironic that he provides such a genealogy – his addressee is well aware of his own family tree. However, this irony pervades the interactions of the disguised Odysseus, so it seems likely that there is a broader motivation for the emphatic repetition of μοῦνον, and the distinctiveness of this family trait in relation to the whole poem.

Goldhill argues that the use of μοῦνος in the Homeric poems is not synonymous with οἶος, as may be assumed.[44] Rather, it is imbued with a sense of threat or danger, so to be μοῦνος is to be in a precarious position. Goldhill's argument is based on a thorough survey of how this word is used in both Homeric poems, and as such it does reveal a depth of meaning that is not present in the alternative οἶος. In the case of procreation, such precariousness is obvious: an only child is not a reliable heir, and is no heir at all if she is an only daughter. For this reason, having only one child is not the usual state of affairs in the

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[44] The *LFgrE* lists them as synonyms; Goldhill (2010) 119.

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Homeric poems.[45] Aegyptius, the elder who speaks first in the Ithacan assembly, has four sons: one had gone with Odysseus and been eaten by the Cyclops; one is among the Suitors, and the other two are in charge of his farm. Nestor's many sons create a picture of safety and stability in his palace, as he has no reason to fear that his inheritance will fall out of the family. Menelaus' son by a slave-woman, Megapenthes, is testament to the necessity of having a male child, even if he must be illegitimate. In this way, the single male line of Odysseus' family is marked out, and Goldhill argues that, as well as being dangerous, this embodies an ideal. Odysseus' family is idealised in the fact that the genealogical line has survived through three generations of single sons, and that those three generations can co-exist harmoniously. In the final battle scene of the *Odyssey*, Laertes, Odysseus and Telemachus all appear in the peak of their strength, and band together to triumph. The inherent riskiness of their single family line enhances the ideal they represent, and marks the family out as unique and special.[46]

Goldhill's argument gains further significance when we consider how it can emphasise the affection elicited by an only son. When Eurycleia learns that Telemachus is planning to leave Ithaca for his trip to Pylos and Sparta, she is horrified, and asks him how we could go on such a voyage μοῦνος ἐὼν ἀγαπητός (2.365). It seems unreasonable for μοῦνος to be mean simply "alone", suggesting that Eurycleia's concern is based on the danger of a lone sea voyage. The additional adjective ἀγαπητός leads to the usual translation of "a beloved only son", which is how this line is most commonly interpreted.[47] Eurycleia is especially concerned about Telemachus because he is a cherished only child, and his long absence would cause anguish in the household. He is all the more ἀγαπητός because he is μοῦνος. This conception of a beloved only child is also used once in a simile, which emphasises the love of a father for his only son. This simile is used when Telemachus returns from his travels and meets Eumaeus in the swineherd's hut. Eumaeus leaps up at the sight of him and greets him with kisses:

> ὡς δὲ πατὴρ ὃν παῖδα φίλα φρονέων ἀγαπάζῃ
> ἐλθόντ᾽ ἐξ ἀπίης γαίης δεκάτῳ ἐνιαυτῷ,
> μοῦνον τηλύγετον, τῷ ἔπ᾽ ἄλγεα πολλὰ μογήσῃ

16.17-19.

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[45] Goldhill (2010) 124.
[46] Goldhill (2010) 125-6.
[47] West, in Heubeck, West and Hainsworth (1988) 152.

This simile has an ironic pathos, made clear in line 11 when Telemachus is called the "dear son" (φίλος υἱός) of the disguised Odysseus, who looks on as Eumaeus greets him. The swineherd's great affection for Telemachus is a reflection of the genuine paternal love that Odysseus cannot at this moment express, and that affection is emphasised with the simile. The decade's absence and the far-off lands mentioned in line 16 remind us of Odysseus' even greater time away, and the places he has seen that are even beyond the human realm. The father's affection, expressed in φίλα, ἀγαπάζῃ and τηλύγετον, is emphasised with the addition of μοῦνον; all the previous terms of affection are heightened by the fact that he is the only son, and so bears all the weight of his father's hopes. The simile not only demonstrates how much Eumaeus cares for Telemachus, but also reflects the situation of Odysseus and Telemachus, who are both only sons, and who are therefore more cherished by their families.

However, Goldhill does not fully explore the implications of the idealism that he argues is inherent in the line of only sons. When Laertes, Odysseus and Telemachus fight together in the final battle, they do not appear as a family at all, but as a band of contemporaries, with Odysseus as their leader. After Odysseus has revealed his identity to his father, Laertes is bathed and Athene transforms him, making him taller and stronger (24.367-71). He is here referred to as "shepherd of the people" (ποιμένι λαῶν 368), which suggests he is still an active warrior.[48] He speaks aloud a wish that he was still as strong as he was in his youth (376-82), but when the time for battle comes, he and Dolios are called warriors (πολεμισταί 499) even though they are grey-haired (πολιοί 499). With the help of Athene, he hurls his spear and causes the first casualty (520-5). The effects of age seem to have been reversed, and Laertes is no longer an old man, but an equal participant with his son and grandson. He himself even draws attention to the strangeness of the situation when he rejoices that "my son and my grandson are arguing over who is the bravest!" (υἱός θ᾽ υἱωνός τ᾽ ἀρετῆς πέρι δῆριν ἔχουσιν 515).[49] This is an inversion of the kind of inter-generational conflict that is portrayed in the *Theogony*. The three single sons, fighting together as contemporaries, do not represent an ideal of a family, but a distortion of one, with the generational differences between them flattened out. Laertes and Telemachus are cast as Odysseus' supporters rather than his predecessor and successor, a dynamic that is made clear when they enter battle, and Odysseus leads them (501). What Goldhill argued to be idealism is in fact unnatural, and inconsistent with the genealogical succession which is essential to

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[48] This epithet is most commonly associated with Agamemnon. See Haubold (2000).
[49] δῆριν occurs only here and at *Il.* 17.158, where Glaucus uses it to describe the desperate struggle of a man for his own land. *LFgrE* (s.v.) suggests that it may have a specific meaning relating to a dispute over property.

human society. The support of his father and his son is essential to Odysseus' successful return, and so the scene of three generations fighting together acts as a specific example of the tension between the twin imperatives of normal change and Odysseus' *nostos*.

As well as marking out the family of Odysseus, the line of single sons marks out the *Odyssey* from other stories about this family, particularly those represented by a lost poem of the Epic Cycle, the *Telegony*. This poem has received more derision from modern scholars than any of the other lost poems of the Cycle. M. West calls it "an ill-assorted bundle of legends about the end of Odysseus' life", and it is often thought to incorporate parts of an older poem known as the *Thesprotis*.[50] As with all Proclus' prose summaries, events are listed in quick succession with no regard for narrative arc or characterisation, and in many cases it is up to us as interpreters to infer how this might have formed a coherent epic poem. The first half of the poem seems to have described the fulfilment of Tiresias' prophecy to Odysseus in the first Nekyia of the *Odyssey*: he performs sacrifices on Ithaca, travels to Elis to inspect the cattle there, and then travels to Thesprotia, where he performs the sacrifices to Poseidon that Tiresias had instructed him to do.[51] This is the point at which Proclus' summary veers dramatically from the tradition as expressed in the *Odyssey*. Odysseus marries the Thesprotian queen, Callidice, and she bears his son, who is named Polypoites. This immediately seems inconsistent with the Odysseus we know from the *Odyssey*, who resists Calypso's promise of immortality, and an enchanted life with Circe, in order to return to Penelope. The birth of Callidice's son seems more incredible when we are told that, on returning to Ithaca after Callidice's death, Penelope has in the meantime also borne him a son, with the uncannily similar name of Polyporthes.[52] These are not the only two near-identical names, however; the next paragraph of Proclus' summary informs us that Circe's son by Odysseus, Telegonus,[53] arrives on Ithaca in search of his father, and then unknowingly kills Odysseus in a raid. Proclus' final sentence brings this all to a neat conclusion with the immortality and intermarriage of the principal characters: Telegonus marries Penelope, and Telemachus marries Circe.

It seems likely from Proclus' summary that the *Telegony* was quite a different poem in style and content from either of the Homeric poems, even allowing for the inherent

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[50] West (2003) 18-9, and (2013) 288-315.

[51] *Od.* 11.121-31.

[52] Polyporthes' name is a reference to Odysseus' Homeric epithet as "sacker of cities" πτολίπορθος, as at *Il.* 2.278 – see West (2013) 299, and Davies (1989) 89. Polypoites' name is therefore likely to be a conscious mimicking of this in order to create the impression of symmetry.

[53] This name makes sense as "far-born", emphasising Telegonus' separation from Odysseus' Ithacan family.

difficulties of judging a full poem from such a brief resumé. It may be that the miraculous events of the end of the poem were intended to sound ridiculous to ancient readers; perhaps this was a more light-hearted kind of epic. However, this does not mean we should not take it seriously and try to understand why the events it relates seem so strange to us. The conclusion of this poem – Odysseus is killed on his return, and someone else marries Penelope – embodies the fearful possibility which motivates the final portion of the *Odyssey* and which necessitates Odysseus' disguise and careful planning. The particular mode of Odysseus' death, being killed by his son because he does not recognise him, is also a possibility which is implicitly acknowledged by the *Odyssey*. Telemachus is sent on his travels in order to learn sufficiently about his father that he will be prepared for his return and not cause a threat to him. Rather than being irrational fabrications, the events of the *Telegony* actually seem to reflect the problems which are inherent in the Ithacan situation, but which the *Odyssey* carefully avoids. The final problem raised by the Cycle poem, the possibility of additional children who could arrive and disrupt the situation, is ruled out in the *Odyssey* by its insistence on the characteristic line of only sons which runs through Odysseus' family.

It is, however, possible that the text of the *Odyssey* contains oblique allusions to the possibility of Odysseus having more than one son. In the passage from book sixteen, quoted above, when Telemachus explains to the disguised Odysseus that he comes from a line of only sons, he refers to himself as the only son Odysseus "left as a child in his halls and took no joy of" (ἐν μεγάροισι τεκὼν λίπεν οὐδ᾽ ἀπόνητο 16.120). It may be possible to infer from the reference to Odysseus' palace that he had other children elsewhere – Telemachus would still be the only child he had left in his halls. Such an inference may be consistent with the uncertainty Telemachus feels about his father, expressed when he tells Mentes in book one that no man can be sure of his parentage. In his travels since then he has been assured that he is a true son of Odysseus, but he has also seen that his family is different from others; Nestor has multiple sons, and Menelaus sired a son by a slave-woman when his wife did not produce one. Odysseus' long absence might make it seem likely to Telemachus that Odysseus could have fathered more children elsewhere, and such an insecurity could be implied when he calls himself the only son in Odysseus' halls. However, this is not the only instance when such a phrase is used. In the first Nekyia, Elpenor beseeches Odysseus by his wife, his father, and his son, "whom you left an only child in your halls" (ὃν μοῦνον ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἔλειπες 11.68). Elpenor is speaking from a different perspective from Telemachus. Rather than fearing that Odysseus had fathered more children elsewhere, as a former member of his crew

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he would be well aware if he had done so on his travels. Furthermore, the narrative of Odysseus' travels in the middle books of the poem makes it perfectly possible that other women had borne his children, even though none are mentioned. He has slept with Calypso for seven years, and she is so enamoured of him that she would keep him there forever. When Odysseus and his comrades leave Circe's isle, they have been there for a full year (ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δή ῥ᾽ ἐνιαυτὸς ἔην, περὶ δ᾽ ἔτραπον ὧραι / μηνῶν φθινόντων 10.469-70). In the *Odyssey*, this notation of time passing is used to suggest the timeliness of an action, or that it occurred at the fated time.[54] However, in the *Theogony* (58-9), this formula denotes the term of a pregnancy, with the prominent example of Mnemosyne's pregnancy after she has slept with Zeus.[55] It would therefore be possible to see here an allusion to the possibility that Circe has borne Odysseus' child. While it is vital in the *Odyssey* that Odysseus only has one child, the poem may still acknowledge the possibility of further children having been born, and the narrative of Odysseus' travels does not rule this out. This makes it more noticeable that the *Odyssey* insists so strongly on the family trait of only sons, because it is a detail which is specifically tailored to the particular narrative needs of this poem. This is another case in which the necessity of Odysseus' return is given prominence over the expected patterns of procreation and change. The implications of his having additional children are explored in the Cycle, and the disastrous consequences of this in the *Telegony* emphasise by contrast the importance of the *Odyssey*'s insistence that Telemachus is an only child.

The focus on Telemachus in the first four books of the poem serves two main purposes. First, a degree of suspense is created as the audience await their first glimpse of Odysseus himself, and Telemachus' travels whet our appetite for the greater adventures that Odysseus will narrate in the middle books. Second, it is made clear that Telemachus is of an age when he will soon be capable of succeeding his father and taking charge in Ithaca. These two purposes illustrate the conflict between return and succession that is present throughout the poem. All the time we are witnessing the maturation of Telemachus, we know that this process cannot be completed until after the return of this father, and therefore outside the scope of this poem. This tension is the source of Telemachus' characterisation as uncertain and hesitant, as he moves through adolescence, towards a manhood which cannot be fulfilled at the same time as his father's return.

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[54] A similar but not identical phrase is used to describe the passage of four years during which Penelope delayed the Suitors which her shroud trick (2.107, 19.152-3, 24.142-3); in these cases the passing of the seasons suggests that the trick could not be sustained any longer. See below in this chapter.

[55] See chapter 1, 25-6 for the significance of this phrase in the *Theogony*.

I now move my focus to the character of Penelope, in order to ascertain how she is affected by the competing imperatives of normal genealogical change, and the return of Odysseus. We saw in chapter 1 of this thesis that the succession myth of the *Theogony* demonstrates a clear pattern of behaviour in the male and female agents of each generation, as men and women react differently to the repeated patterns of genealogical change.[56] The succession myth ends when Zeus finally prevents any opportunity for future generations to succeed him, but we mortals do not have this option. Instead, we must learn how to deal with the tensions of succession, and patriarchs must accept that they will one day be replaced. In Ithaca, the behaviour of Telemachus suggests that he may be capable of taking the place of his father before Odysseus returns. In order for him to do this, though, he would need the support of other members of the household, and especially Penelope. If she follows the pattern of the divine mothers of the *Theogony*, she will favour her son over his father; as genealogical succession is an inevitable and necessary process for mortals, this may be how we would expect her to behave. However, Penelope's devotion to her absent husband is such that she will not allow any man to take his place, not even her own son. She therefore tries to prevent change in the palace, and attempts to freeze time until Odysseus returns.[57] At the end of the poem, her efforts are rewarded when Odysseus is able to take his place in the household once again, but his return is at the expense of the traditional patterns of genealogical history.

I argue earlier in this chapter that Penelope's reaction to Phemius' song in book one can be interpreted to reveal her attitude to change and the passage of time. She hopes for Odysseus' return by keeping him present in her mind, and is not willing to confine him to the past as the other Achaeans have been who are mentioned in Phemius' song. This is why she gives no answer to the suitors, maintaining her own status as wife of Odysseus, and maintaining Telemachus' status as child rather than master of the house. H. Foley, in an illuminating article, presents Penelope as a lone figure in the *Odyssey*, engaging "in an active

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[56] While the dominant patriarch will always try to maintain his power indefinitely, at the expense of subsequent generations, the female always takes the side of her children, particularly the youngest son, and assists them in overthrowing their father. The example of Gaia shows that this female procreative impulse is so strong that she will continually favour the newest, youngest child over her previous offspring; so first she favours Kronos, then Zeus, then Typhoeus. See chapter 1 of this thesis, 24-31.

[57] Suzuki (1989) 75-6 explains Penelope's difficulty in recognising Odysseus to her strategy of "freezing time". In order to recognise the man who is twenty years older than when he left, she must undergo "temporal realignment". However, Penelope's physical recognition of Odysseus happens with the help of Athena's transformation, which makes him look like a god, not like a man who has been aged by decades at war and at sea; there is clearly more to her recognition than just the visual resemblance.

struggle to maintain the cultural norm" while all around her falls into disorder.[58] She does this through loyalty to her husband, and to enable his eventual return.[59] Foley argues that the ceasing of change is a characteristically female task, as women lack the physical strength to bring about social change or manage growth.[60] However, the pattern of the divine succession myth would suggest otherwise: women can cause seismic change, especially with their support of their sons. This option must be available to Penelope, who could support Telemachus as Odysseus' successor. Instead, she decides to use her efforts to forestall change as much as possible. This is not a passive decision, but an active and constant struggle, which we can identify in her behaviour. Natural change, such as that of the seasons and Telemachus' physical maturation, is, however, out of her control, and creates a tension between mother and son which is reflective of the narrative tension running throughout the poem.[61]

The clearest and most famous example of Penelope's desire to forestall change is her trick of the shroud. By weaving and then unravelling a funeral shroud for Laertes, she delays her remarriage, and therefore prevents her status changing from wife of Odysseus to wife of another. The story of this trick is told three times in the poem by different characters, and it is the most well-known episode associated with Penelope.[62] Weaving is a characteristic task of women in both Homeric poems, and can be seen to define the female in the same way that warfare and leadership define the male.[63] Pantelia suggests that in times of instability, such as warfare, women's weaving is a stabilising force, which gives them hope that the normal order of life will return.[64] When Hector in the *Iliad* imagines what life holds for Andromache after his death, the image of her working as a slave at the loom of another man is a strong symbol of the disruption and inversion of normal life.[65] When she later does hear of his death, she vows to destroy everything she had woven for him, in a heartbreaking expression of her loss; he can no longer play his role in protecting her and the city, and so she no longer

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[58] Foley (1978) 9-10.
[59] "to keep open a place for Odysseus she has symbolically stopped change on Ithaca", Foley (1978) 10.
[60] Foley (1978) 10-11.
[61] This is how Foley (1978) 11 explains the tension between mother and son at the start of the poem.
[62] An appreciation of these different perspectives is characteristic of many recent readings of the passages, as shown by their treatment in Heubeck, West, Hainsworth (1988); de Jong explains the focalisation of the different speakers (2001) 50-1.
[63] Hector and Telemachus express this division of tasks (*Il.* 6.490-2; *Od.* 1.356-8, 21.350-2).
[64] Pantelia (1993) 493.
[65] *Iliad* 6.456.

has any need to perform the tasks of a wife.[66]   Penelope's use of weaving similarly demonstrates the disruption of her domestic life, but the significance of the episode extends beyond this symbolic function.

When Penelope relates the story of the shroud to the disguised Odysseus, the tone of their conversation is characterised by sorrow on both sides. She has just asked her guest his name and origins, and Odysseus has cleverly avoided answering by claiming that to do so would bring pain to his heart, "for I am a man of many sorrows" (μάλα δ᾽ εἰμὶ πολύστονος 19.118). Penelope replies with a claim that all her excellence had been destroyed on the day Odysseus left (124-5), but that it would return, along with her fame, if Odysseus were to come back and watch over her life (127-8).[67]   This demonstrates how Penelope's perception of herself is entirely bound up with her husband, but crucially that the loss of her beauty and fame is reversible. When Odysseus returns, she will regain all her virtues, and it will be as if she has travelled backwards in time to before he left. This is the conception that H. Foley describes as the "freezing" of her sexuality.[68]   The "thawing" of her virtues that she looks forward to is not yet possible, however; that is why she then says "Now I am sorrowing" (νῦν δ᾽ ἄχομαι 129). In her husband's absence, she is unable to take part in social life or hospitality, as she describes to the beggar: "In longing for Odysseus I waste my heart away" (ἀλλ᾽ Ὀδυσῆ ποθέουσα φίλον κατατήκομαι ἦτορ 136). This description of her situation suggests that Penelope feels she is at a standstill, and her life will not properly resume until her husband returns.

In contrast to this perception, however, the story of the shroud that follows makes clear that Penelope has not been inactive. Instead, she has been working hard to remain at this standstill.[69]   Her work at the loom consumed her days and her nights (ἠματίη ... νύκτας 149-50), but she never progressed any further with the weaving. In all three versions of the story, the time that passed is expressed in the same way: "But as the fourth year came and the seasons passed..." (ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε τέτρατον ἦλθεν ἔτος καὶ ἐπήλυθον ὧραι 152).[70]   This is the time

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[66] When Andromache first hears the wailing of the people mourning Hector, the shuttle she was weaving with drops from her hand (*Il.* 22.448); at the end of her distraught speech, she says she will burn his clothes since he will not lie in them (22.510-3).

[67] Murnaghan (1987) 43-5 describes Penelope's decline as a kind of disguise, which will be removed on the return of her husband. Her reunion with him comes later than other recognition scenes because her identity as his wife is entirely dependent on his successful return; Telemachus, however, can identify himself as his son even in Odysseus' absence.

[68] Foley (1978).

[69] On the importance of the shroud for Penelope's characterisation, see Lowenstam (2000).

[70] The phrase occurs in the other tellings at 2.107 and 24.142.

at which the maid betrays Penelope and the Suitors become aware of her trick; the passing of the seasons is a reminder that time is passing and natural change is occurring outside the palace, while inside the house, time is at a standstill as the Suitors wait for the weaving to be completed. Penelope's hard work, labouring night and day, had been an attempt to suspend the passage of time and delay her decision, but the passing of the seasons is outside of her control, and so she cannot make time stand still for any longer.

Like the passing of the seasons, Telemachus' physical maturation as he grows older is also outside of Penelope's control. Telemachus' coming of age is a sign of the natural patterns of change that Penelope has been trying to retard. A specific sign of his maturity, the growth of a beard, acts as a sign for Penelope of the time that has passed since Odysseus' departure, and proves an important instigator for events near the end of the poem. Here we are presented with another narrative tease, as it seems that Penelope is going to support Telemachus' succession of his father, and allow him to do so by herself marrying one of the Suitors. In book eighteen, when Athene has beautified Penelope and inspired her to solicit gifts from the Suitors, Penelope explains her decision to consider remarriage. Even this seeming disloyalty to her husband is done because of his orders to her before he left, which she repeats to the Suitors at this point. Wary of the dangers of war, Odysseus had told his wife that he may not return, so while he is away she must take care of the household, including his mother and father (18.266-8). However, she is to remarry, and leave the house, when their son grows a beard (αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν δὴ παῖδα γενειήσαντα ἴδηαι, / γήμασθ᾽ ᾧ κ᾽ ἐθέλῃσθα, τεὸν κατὰ δῶμα λιποῦσα 269-70). This physical sign of Telemachus' adolescence marks the end of Penelope's designated time to await her husband's return. As her son is now fully grown, she must become the wife of someone else, even though she still regards such a marriage as "hateful" (στυγερὸς γάμος 272). Penelope's repetition of this speech at this point is striking. It seems she had been keeping this sign from the Suitors until now, who otherwise would have reminded her of her husband's wishes in order to cajole her into remarriage. Her decision also seems somewhat belated, as most estimates put Telemachus' age at about twenty years, so he would surely have shown signs of a beard before now.[71] It is possible to cast some doubt over the veracity of Penelope's words here, as there is no other corroboration for this speech of Odysseus in the poem.

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[71] Fernandez-Galiano, in Russo, Fernandez-Galiano, Heubeck (1992) 61, 66 maintains that "it is not necessary to interpret this as a *lying* speech in order to see it as a speech intended to deceive and *mislead* the Suitors".

There have, however, been references to Telemachus' maturity previously in book eighteen. Eurynome, one of Penelope's maids, tells her to stop weeping and instruct Telemachus to stop consorting with the Suitors, "for your son is of an age, and it has been your dearest prayer to the immortals to see him bearded" (ἤδη μὲν γάρ τοι παῖς τηλίκος, ὃν σὺ μάλιστα / ἠρῶ ἀθανάτοισι γενειήσαντα ἰδέσθαι 175-6). In other circumstances such a prayer would not be surprising, because it follows the traditional pattern of the female preference for change. However, if Odysseus' instructions about remarriage are genuine, then such a prayer from Penelope would amount to a wish to remarry soon, which is inconsistent with her behaviour throughout the poem. It may be that Eurynome had misunderstood Penelope's wishes, and is unaware of any instructions from Odysseus. Another possibility, however, is that Penelope's report of Odysseus' instructions is an invention, inspired by Eurynome's mention here of Telemachus' beardedness. Penelope mentions Telemachus' growth to maturity again when she encounters him in the hall shortly afterwards. She reproaches him for the lack of respect shown to the beggar; such behaviour may be excusable from a child, she says, but now that he has "reached the threshold of manhood" (ἥβης μέτρον ἱκανεις 217), he should rethink his actions. His recent maturing is very much on her mind, therefore, but it is not made clear in the text whether she has fabricated Odysseus' speech to her, or is recalling it faithfully.

The scene in book eighteen shows the inevitability of natural change, represented by Telemachus' physical maturation to adulthood. If Odysseus had given these instructions about Telemachus' adolescence, it would suggest that he was aware of the importance of such change, and that Penelope's period of waiting would be inappropriate once Telemachus had become a man. The intervention of Athene, however, shows Penelope's reluctance to accept such change, as it is not until the goddess has caused her to confront the Suitors that she reveals (or, perhaps, invents) Odysseus' instructions. Even though Penelope is unwilling, the possibility of remarriage reminds us of the pattern of female behaviour in the *Theogony*, and heightens narrative tension as we wait for Odysseus to reclaim his position. Penelope still has the opportunity to choose progress instead of suspending time. However, her characterisation throughout the poem makes it clear just how unlikely she is to forget her husband and move forward.

Penelope's reluctance to remarry is so great that on two occasions she wishes for death as a favourable alternative. I argue above in chapter 3 that Helen's repeated death-wishes in the *Iliad* are symbolic of her isolation. Penelope is also presented as isolated, but

specifically because of her separation from her husband. Her death-wishes demonstrate her close connection with Odysseus, and, as death is the ultimate end of all natural progress, show her refusal to allow change in the absence of her husband. This is evident from the first time Penelope speaks of her own death, in book eighteen. Awaking from a deep sleep, she speaks aloud her wish that Artemis would "give me sweet death... now at once" (μαλακὸν θάνατον πόροι ... αὐτίκα νῦν 18.202-3). This is immediately different in form from any of Helen's wishes, as it is addressed to a goddess in the form of a prayer, which suggests the belief that the gods can be benevolent; it is also different in its characterisation of death as "sweet" or "soft" (μαλακόν). While Helen's imagined deaths were depicted as a punishment for her wrongdoing, Penelope sees death as a release or reward, and so there is no suggestion that her own actions have caused her sorrow. Penelope's reason for wishing for death is to escape the sorrow that wastes her away (203-4) – sorrow that is caused directly by the absence of her "beloved husband" whose "manifold excellence" she longs for (πόσιος ποθέουσα φίλοιο / παντοίην ἀρετήν 204-5). That her sorrow is caused purely by Odysseus' absence creates a connection between husband and wife. Although she laments his absence, her isolation is not complete because of her emotional dependence on him.

Penelope speaks a more elaborate prayer to Artemis in book twenty – again, she has just awoken from sleeping. First, she wishes that the goddess would strike her in the chest with an arrow and take her heart straight away (αἴθε μοι ἤδη / ἰὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι βαλοῦσ᾽ ἐκ θυμὸν ἕλοιο / αὐτίκα νῦν 20.61-3). This immediate and violent death is followed by a more elaborate imagining, which is in some ways similar to Helen's death-wish in *Iliad* 6. In this speech Penelope wishes that a wind (θύελλα 63) would snatch her up and take her to cast her into Oceanus. She then compares herself to the daughters of Pandareus, who were blessed by the gods after being orphaned, but taken by storms (or "snatchers" ἅρπυιαι 77) before they were married, and given to the "hateful Erinyes" (στυγερῇσιν ἐρινύσιν 78). This story is not known from any other source, and it seems to be entirely separate from the story of Pandareus' daughter the nightingale, which Penelope mentions at 19.518-23.[72] Here, the emphasis of the story is that the girls were taken before marriage, and therefore remained virgins. Combined with Penelope's repeated invocations to Artemis, this speech suggests that Penelope's greatest wish is to remain chaste in Odysseus' absence, and even death would

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[72] Levaniouk (2008) 28-32 argues that the two myths of the Pandareids mentioned by Penelope are connected by the dissolution of the female, which she suggests is connected to the festival of Apollo which falls on the day of the bow contest. The difference in the myths is explained by Penelope's twin roles: in the first she speaks as mother, and in the second as wife.

be preferable to remarriage. As Levaniouk argues, the story of the Pandareids as told by Penelope describes how they were denied family life, even though they had all the accomplishments necessary to prepare them for marriage; Hera, Artemis and Athena gave them beauty, intelligence and crafts (70-2). Penelope has already attained married family life, but all that will be snatched from her – as surely as the winds snatched the girls away – if she must abandon that family and marry another man.[73]

After her mythical comparison, Penelope utters two final wishes: that the Olympians would "hide me from sight" (ὣς ἔμ᾽ ἀϊστώσειαν Ὀλύμπια δώματ᾽ ἔχοντες 79), or again that Artemis would strike her, "so that I would arrive below the hateful earth with Odysseus in my mind" (ὄφρ᾽ Ὀδυσῆα / ὀσσομένη καὶ γαῖαν ὕπο στυγερὴν ἀφικοίμην 80-1). The wish to be hidden is similar to the fate of Pandareus' daughters, but replaces the "snatchers" with the gods of Olympus, and the final invocation to Artemis echoes the opening of her speech, giving her a tone of desperation. That she wishes not just to die, but to descend to the underworld with Odysseus "in her mind" emphasises the importance she places on remaining loyal to her husband. It is implied that a new marriage would replace Odysseus in her affections and mind. Her desire to keep Odysseus in her mind has perhaps been prompted by the dream she has just had of her husband, which she describes after her prayer to Artemis (87-90). In her dream, she had seen Odysseus' likeness as he was before he left, sleeping beside her. She had rejoiced in thinking that it was real, and her anguish on waking has been triggered by the realisation that it was imagined. The death that she imagines, going beneath the earth with Odysseus in her mind, is therefore an eternal kind of sleep, which would be favourable to Penelope if it meant she could dream interminably of Odysseus.[74] Penelope's devotion to her husband has caused her to try to prevent natural change. Indeed, her aversion to change is so strong that it causes her to have the fundamentally unnatural desire for her own death.

Both of these death-wishes are uttered after Penelope has woken from sleep, and sleep seems to be one of her most characteristic repeated actions.[75] Six times in the poem her slumber is described, and it usually involves input from Athene. However, on the night after the bow contest, she tells Eurycleia that she has not slept properly since Odysseus left (23.18-

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[73] Levaniouk (2008) 24-7.

[74] See Turkeltaub (2015) for an alternative interpretation of Penelope's sleeping scenes, and the thematic link between sleep and death.

[75] Another important repeated scene is when Penelope leaves her room (1.328-66; 16.409-51; 17.26-166; 18.158-303; 19.53-604; 21.1-358; 23.1-296). See de Jong (2001) 35-6.

9). If her frequent sleeping was not bringing her rest, it must have been disturbed in some way, and a few times her dreams are described which may have done this. Sleep may also have further significance, as a method of suspending time, which explains why it is characteristic behaviour for Penelope in Odysseus' absence. The most common repeated sleeping scene involves Penelope ascending the stairs to her quarters, and weeping for Odysseus until Athene sends her to sleep. This first occurs in book one, after Telemachus has rebuked her complaint about Phemius' song:

> ἐς δ᾽ ὑπερῷ᾽ ἀναβᾶσα σὺν ἀμφιπόλοισι γυναιξὶ
> κλαῖεν ἔπειτ᾽ Ὀδυσῆα φίλον πόσιν, ὄφρα οἱ ὕπνον
> ἡδὺν ἐπὶ βλεφάροισι βάλε γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη.
>
> 1.362-4.[76]

The second and third lines of this formula are repeated at 16.450-1, and the whole three-line phrase is repeated at 21.356-8. Fernandez-Galiano suggests that the formula is less suited to the first two instances than to the third, because in book twenty-one Penelope must be asleep in order to remain unaware of the battle in the hall.[77] However, just because there is more of a pragmatic justification in this instance does not mean we should disregard the use of the formula in its other occurrences.[78] In book one, Penelope returns upstairs when she is startled by the new-found authority of her son; his maturing may be the trigger that causes her to weep for Odysseus, as she realises how much time has passed since he left for Troy. Athene may therefore be giving her "pleasant sleep" (ὕπνον ἡδύν 363-4) in order to relieve her of this sorrow. The situation is similar in book sixteen, as Penelope is in a state of heightened emotion. She has learned from the herald Medon that the Suitors had been planning to kill Telemachus on his return from Sparta, and confronted Antinous; Eurymachus has dismissed her fears and promised no harm to Telemachus (16.417-47). Penelope then returns upstairs, and she may well know, as the poet tells his audience, that Eurymachus spoke while still plotting her son's death (448). She is, however, helpless to do any more than she has done, and so it is in state of great anguish that she returns upstairs, and weeps for the husband whose return would bring an end to all these problems. This is when Athene gives her "pleasant sleep" (ὕπνον ἡδύν 450-1), and it is not surprising that she would do so out of

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[76] Repeated (or partially repeated) at 16.450-1 and 21.356-8.
[77] Russo, Fernandez-Galiano, Heubeck (1992) 190-1.
[78] Fenik (1974) 5-60 discusses Odysseus' meeting with the Phaeacians, demonstrating how a theme can be used effectively even in instances when it has no pragmatic justification.

sympathy for Penelope at this point. In the first two uses of this sleeping formula, then, Athene has good reason to bring Penelope relief from her sadness by sending her to sleep.

In book four, Athene does not seem to bring about Penelope's sleep, and it is described in more natural terms – "sweet sleep came upon her, she leant back, and all her joints relaxed" (ἐπήλυθε νήδυμος ὕπνος· / εὗδε δ' ἀνακλινθεῖσα, λύθεν δέ οἱ ἅψεα πάντα 4.793-4). Even without Athene, sleep is a soft release from the anguish that she had been suffering in fear for her son (789-90). The goddess does, however, interfere with this sleep, sending a dream-figure to Penelope to comfort her. The "phantom" or "ghost" (εἴδωλον 796) is in the likeness of Penelope's sister Iphtime, and tells the sleeping Penelope that Telemachus is sure to return, and she has no need to be distressed (804-7); she even reveals that she has been sent by Athene to give this message (828-9). With her mind always on her husband, Penelope then asks about Odysseus' whereabouts, but the image refuses to speak of him (830-7). Despite this refusal, when Penelope awakes from the sleep her heart is comforted by the vision (840-1). In this case, Athene had more purpose than just to relieve Penelope from her sorrow. She has given her specific and encouraging information, and assured her that she has the support of a goddess.

In book eighteen, after Penelope has announced that she wishes to present herself to the suitors (a desire planted in her by Athene, 18.158-62), the goddess sends her to sleep with another specific purpose. This time, Athene intends to beautify Penelope in order to increase her effect on the hearts of the suitors. She anoints her with ambrosia like Aphrodite, makes her taller, statelier and paler of skin (192-6). This is an important part of Athene's wider plan eventually to bring about the contest of the bow, so Penelope's slumber this time has nothing to do with providing her relief from her sorrow. When Penelope awakes it is evident she has not gained any refreshment from her sleep, and this is the first time she wishes for death from Artemis. Her own emotions are therefore clearly marked out from the intention that Athene has placed in her to go before the suitors. When she prays for death again in book twenty, she has also just awoken from sleep, and her anguish is apparently triggered by a vision she had of the young Odysseus in her sleep. This instance of sleep seems to create a link between wife and husband even before they are reunited, as Athene has sent Odysseus to sleep in the lines preceding Penelope's awaking (20.54). Her awaking at the moment of his going to sleep is suggestive of how tantalisingly close they are to their reunion, without quite being fully together again.

The last of Penelope's sleeping scenes comes during the bow contest. She has encouraged the disguised beggar to try the bow, and Telemachus has rebuked her for interfering in this masculine realm, telling her that "the bow is the concern of men" (τόξον δ᾽ ἄνδρεσσι μελήσει 21.352) and sending her upstairs.[79] This forms a perfect symmetry with the scene in the first book, as the same language is used to describe Penelope returning upstairs, weeping for Odysseus and then sleeping (354-8). Penelope's slumber is essential at this stage in the plot, as she must be unconscious of the battle downstairs to facilitate her eventual recognition of Odysseus the following day.

While Penelope's sleep may give her the impression that time has been suspended, it is also an important natural process, and the disruption of normal sleeping patterns can be used as a symbol of a character's suffering. A powerful example of this is in the final two books of the *Iliad*, when Achilles' grief for Patroclus results in insomnia. In book twenty-three, he lies on the shore while all the other men have gone to their beds, and struggles to sleep, "groaning heavily" (βαρὺ στενάχων 23.60). When he does sleep, a vision of Patroclus appears to him, demanding proper burial (69-92). After this, Achilles cannot sleep again, and later in the book he spends the whole night giving honours at Patroclus' burial mound (217-25). At the opening of the next book we find the most powerful description of his insomnia. After Patroclus' funeral games, all the other men go to their beds, but Achilles cannot sleep. He tosses and turns, weeping all the time, and then goes out onto the shore to pace up and down until the sunrise (24.1-13). What at first seems to be describing just one night in fact goes on for twelve days (31).[80] It should not surprise us that Achilles' grief is stopping him from sleeping, but when Thetis visits him later in the book we see how important the natural processes of life are. Thetis asks him:

> τέκνον ἐμόν, τέο μέχρις ὀδυρόμενος καὶ ἀχεύων
> σὴν ἔδεαι κραδίην, μεμνημένος οὔτε τι σίτου
> οὔτ᾽ εὐνῆς; ἀγαθὸν δὲ γυναικί περ ἐν φιλότητι
> μίσγεσθ᾽· οὐ γάρ μοι δηρὸν βέῃ, ἀλλά τοι ἤδη
> ἄγκι παρέστηκεν θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή.

24.128-32.

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[79] This is the same phrasing as used by Telemachus at 1.358, Alcinous at 11.352-3 and Hector at *Il*.6.490-3. See above in this chapter.
[80] That the actions described are repeated over several nights is suggested by the use of iterative verbs: δινεύσκεν (12), λήθεσκεν (13), ζεύξειεν (14), δησάακετο (15), παυέσκετο (17) and ἔασκεν (17).

In his sorrow, Achilles has forgotten two of the key components of human life: eating and sleeping. Although εὐνῆς in line 130 leads onto the third part of Thetis' advice – to have sex with a woman – it also refers to the sleep that has evaded Achilles since Patroclus' death. All these things are important, says Thetis, because you are mortal, and death will come soon. Sexual procreation is a vital part of being mortal, as it is in the creation of children that we gain the only kind of immortality available to us. Eating and sleeping have a different kind of function for mortals, in sustaining us. The gods do not eat grain and drink wine, because they are immortal.[81] They similarly do not have any need for the refreshment which comes from sleep. In refusing to eat or sleep, Achilles is denying his mortal needs. Sleep is a characteristic activity of Penelope in the *Odyssey*, but it is not natural sleep, and she therefore suffers as Achilles does. Instead, her sleep is usually brought upon her by Athene to temporarily relieve her pain, and her repetitive patterns of behaviour are suggestive of an attempt to suspend time. After the battle in the hall, she tells Eurycleia that she has slept properly for the first time since Odysseus left – although she has not yet been reunited with Odysseus, this is a sign that she, and the household, are starting to return to normal.

Importantly, Penelope's repeated scenes of sleep only occur while Odysseus is away. Once the two are reunited, sleep is instead delayed as they each tell stories of their time apart. Penelope's wakefulness is especially emphasised ("Sleep did not fall on her eyelids until everything was told", οὐδέ οἱ ὕπνος / πῖπτεν ἐπὶ βλεφάροισι πάρος καταλέξαι ἅπαντα 23.308-9). Athene's role now is not to bring them slumber but to extend the night (νύκτα μὲν ἐν περάτῃ δολιχὴν σχέθεν 243), and bring the dawn only when she judges that they have had enough time together and enough sleep (345-8). Penelope's sleep was part of her attempt to suspend time and prevent change, but now that Odysseus has returned it is not necessary. This does not necessarily mean, however, that traditional patterns of change will resume now that he is back in the palace.

Right from the outset of the *Odyssey*, we have been presented with two options for how Telemachus and Penelope will behave in Odysseus' absence: either they will maintain the status quo, in effect suspending the passage of time until he returns; or they will move forward into the next generation, with Telemachus as the head of the family. The second of these is the most natural option to take, as the patterns of change and succession are a vital part of human life, and necessitated by our mortality. However, the nature of the poem itself

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[81] See Clay (1981).

forbids this option, as it is a poem about *nostos*, and that *nostos* cannot occur if Telemachus has already taken over. The timing of the start of the poem is crucial to this; Telemachus is just coming of age, and so it is now the right time when he should think about succeeding his father. However, it is the determined plan of Athene, and the devoted hope of Penelope, that Odysseus will return and be head of the household again, so these two women ensure that Telemachus is not in a position to succeed his father, even though he has the potential to do so. By the end of the poem, Odysseus has fully regained his place as patriarch, and Telemachus is cast as his supporter. The question of succession is forgotten.

The conclusion of the *Odyssey* has been a matter for discussion since at least the time of Aristarchus and Aristophanes of Byzantium, who seem to have been of the opinion that the poem should end after the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope in book twenty-three.[82] The phrasing used by the scholiast, that here the poem reaches its τέλος, may be ambiguous in meaning, and does not necessarily imply that the rest of the poem should be ignored.[83] Whatever the scholiast's exact meaning, and whatever the strength of the arguments either way,[84] the remaining lines of book twenty-three and the whole of book twenty-four are still to be found in modern editions and translations of the poem, and it is rare to come across a modern commentator who argues for their exclusion.[85] Heubeck, in the introduction to his commentary on book twenty-four, gives a clear explanation of why he believes in the authenticity of the book: "the narrative of the last book is so carefully prepared for throughout the rest of the poem, and in such various ways, that a failure to fulfil the expectations aroused by both direct announcements and indirect indications would have been profoundly disappointing and irritating to the poem's audience". Such announcements and indications are detailed by Wender, who presents a convincing case for the importance of the final scenes.[86] However, it is still striking that the question of where the poem should end has remained in discussion from the Alexandrian period to the modern day. There must be some difficulty posed by the final sections of the poem in order to make such a question possible;

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[82] See Russo, Fernandez-Galiano and Heubeck (1992) 342-5, on the scholion to 23.296, and the "quite indigestible mass of material" which has been written about it.

[83] Stanford (1965) argues that the most likely meaning of τέλος here is of the climax or "consummation" (17) of the poem's aims, rather than its literal conclusion. For a summary of the problem raised by the scholion and reactions to it, see Page (1955).

[84] Page (1955) summarises the main arguments for and against ending the poem at this point; an example of the kind of arguments raised against the authenticity of the final sections can be found in Bury (1922), who calls the opening scene of book twenty-four "irrelevant, if not insufferable" (2). Wender (1978) offers a sustained argument for the authenticity of the last sections of the poem.

[85] See Marks (2008) for a summary of modern opinion, and further bibliography.

[86] Heubeck in Russo, Fernandez-Galiano and Heubeck (1992) 353; see also Wender (1978).

the poem does not present us with the answers, or the ending, which we might expect. Why does the *Odyssey* seem to struggle so much to come to a satisfactory end?

To address this question, we should consider what an audience should expect from the ending of the poem.   Narratologically, what is expected from a poem's conclusion is closure of some kind – the "loose ends" of the story are tied up, and the principal questions which arose during the course of the narrative are resolved. A comparison with the conclusion of the *Iliad* serves as an example of how this may be achieved. Although the poem ends with the funeral of Hector, it gives the impression of putting an end to the story of the whole war. This is because proleptic allusions throughout the poem have left us in no doubt that soon after Hector's death, Achilles is fated to die also, and that Greek victory will follow after that. Furthermore, there is such a strong tradition about events after the conclusion of the *Iliad* – expressed in the poems of the *Aethiopis*, the *Little Iliad* and the *Sack of Ilion*, and alluded to in the *Odyssey* itself – that an audience hearing the end of the *Iliad* is not left with unanswered questions about what happened next. This kind of closure is not possible in the case of the *Odyssey*, because no such strong tradition exists about what followed. The *Telegony*, discussed above, is the only poem of the Epic Cycle which follows on from the *Odyssey*, but it seems to have been of a very different tone from the Homeric poems. The *Telegony* also has a problematic ending, in its fairytale solution of double marriages, and the patricide of Odysseus by Telegonus. It seems that this contrived conclusion was the only way the poet could resolve the difficult issues raised by the situation at the end of the *Odyssey*.

The *Odyssey* may not give us satisfactory narrative closure because the questions it has raised, and the tensions on which the narrative has been based, are not capable of being resolved. One such example is the case of Telemachus: what will happen now that he has developed the maturity to take control of the household himself? Either Odysseus will have to retire to the country like Laertes, which seems entirely out of keeping with his character and is difficult to imagine, or Telemachus will eventually have to overthrow him, in a way similar to the events of the *Telegony* which have faced such ridicule. Similar issues are raised by the final battle of the poem, as the families of the slain Suitors seek retribution for their killing. The problem of this desire for revenge is solved by the direct intervention of Athene and Zeus, but not before the two sides engage in battle and further deaths are caused.

The solution of Athene and Zeus can be read as a reflection of a permanent change in how social justice will be achieved. Heubeck suggests that the gods replace "the old patriarchal system" in which "bloodshed repeatedly calls for further bloodshed" and in its place establish "a new moral order, one based on a justice guarded and supported by the gods".[87] This is a rather optimistic interpretation, as the truce between the two sides is artificial and enforced, not the result of any new understanding of justice. Athene does bring a stop to the fighting, but not before she has actively encouraged it, strengthening Laertes so he can take the first enemy casualty (517-20) and exhorting Telemachus to show himself worthy of fighting alongside his father (506-9). The narrative suggests that the gods can manipulate our actions at their whim, and we are bound to follow them. Heubeck argues that the brief fight is necessary to show the suitors' kinsmen that it would be impossible to defeat Odysseus, but this is inconsistent with his own interpretation, as it would be an admission of martial superiority, not the negotiation of a new moral order.[88] This justification for the fight also weakens the power of Athene's intervention. The orders of the goddess terrify the crowd and send them running in fear for their lives (533-6). It is not reason or a realisation of the futility of the situation, but pure fear, which causes them to retreat. The thunderbolt that Zeus sends is a reminder to Athene that the fighting must stop (539-41), but also acts as a threat from Zeus to all those present. The final scene has some suggestion that events could escape the control even of the gods, especially in the case of Odysseus' fury. It is clearly stated that he and Telemachus would have killed all the kinsmen if Athene had not intervened (528), and the final simile of Odysseus as an eagle, swooping down on the crowd (537-8), is ominous and threatening. The conclusion of the battle is in general quite hasty, and it certainly bears no suggestion of an organic process of reconciliation, resulting in a new kind of justice.

The image that we are left with of Ithaca and its people is dominated by fear: of the gods, and of Odysseus himself. We are not left with a clear impression that Odysseus' rule will be characterised by justice and mercy, as reconciliation is only brought into effect through intimidation and fear. It could be argued that some closure is achieved at a narratological level, as the final book mirrors the first one and completes a ring-composition; the final appearances of several characters show them at their peak, and in this way they can be said to "take their curtain call".[89] de Jong claims that Athene's intervention brings the story to a "satisfactory" close, as the "good king Odysseus" cannot be shown killing all his

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[87] Russo, Fernandez-Galiano, Heubeck (1992) 405-6.
[88] Russo, Fernandez-Galiano, Heubeck (1992) 415.
[89] de Jong (2001) 565.

people.[90]   However, this would seem to be more of a reason to be dissatisfied – Odysseus would have killed them if Athene had not intervened, and her enforced truce does not change his violent intention. It seems that the domestic leader in Odysseus has been subsumed by the Iliadic warrior. Similarly, the domestic problems of the poem have been overshadowed by the impulse for return and retribution. The *Odyssey* has made use throughout of the theme of succession, to create narrative teases and suggest tension within and between characters. However, it never resolves the problems it itself raises about the traditional patterns of change. Now that Telemachus has matured, there will be two men capable of leadership, and it is difficult to imagine Odysseus retreating to the country as Laertes had done. At some point Odysseus must allow his son to succeed him, but there is no suggestion in the poem that this will ever occur. The *Theogony* raises such questions and answers them in a way which is final, but impossible for the human world to replicate. The *Odyssey* does the same, even though the characters involved are human, through the use of divine intervention. The resulting solution is artificial, for Odysseus cannot be king "always", as Zeus says he will be (αἰεί 24.483), but it is narratologically necessary, and emphasises the poem's predominant theme of *nostos* above all else.

The involvement of the gods also has another important implication: there is no suggestion of a link between the time of the poem's events and our own time. The solution reached in Ithaca is as unattainable in our own lives as Zeus' solution to challenges to his supremacy in the *Theogony* – eating the mother of his children. We are not encouraged to see a smooth genealogical transition from the events of the *Odyssey* to the modern world. The full and final intervention of Zeus and Athene instead creates a break, and places these events firmly in the distant past. The *Odyssey* therefore reveals itself to be a poem about another age, even though so much of its domestic life is replicated in our own world. While the *Iliad* places itself more firmly in the distant past, shown by the use of comparisons with men οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσίν ("such as men are now"), the *Odyssey* seems at first to reach forward into our own time – there are fewer exhibitions of supreme physical strength and most of the characters on Ithaca spend their lives unaware of the immanent presence of Athene. Justice, whether we agree or not with its outcomes, is a key theme, and the suitors are so castigated by the other characters because they transgress an accepted social norm. The *Odyssey* also makes use of the *Theogony*'s model of gender-conflict. The relationships between Penelope, Telemachus and the absent Odysseus illustrate the tensions and difficulties that every

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[90] de Jong (2001) 565.

patriarch must face in human society, and at points in the narrative we are teased with the possibility that we will be given a solution to these problems. However, the poem's ending frustrates that possibility. The sole governing concern of the poem throughout has been the successful return of Odysseus, and all other concerns have been subordinated to that aim. Ultimately, this means that the ending of the poem cannot give us the resolutions we might expect, because that is not the purpose of the poem and never has been. The traditional patterns of change over time, and the place of the poem's events in the overarching history of the cosmos, are exploited at certain points in the *Odyssey* in order to create tension and present narrative teases, but the solution of tricky issues of succession and inheritance is not a priority for the poet. Everything else has been subordinated to the poem's theme of *nostos*, which at the close of book twenty-four has been completely and decisively achieved.

Conclusion

My aim in this thesis has been to show that the early hexameter tradition should be read as a coherent and interrelated whole; and to demonstrate that this approach can have an effect not just on how we view the large-scale patterns which are shared across poems, but also on the small details of characterisation which we find in the Homeric poems. By considering the poems of Hesiod, Homer, and the Epic Cycle together, we move closer to the way in which they were received by their earliest audiences – not as stand-alone monoliths, but as component parts of a much greater whole. Once we have a better understanding of the patterns and structures which are shared across this tradition, we are able to see how they are reflected on the much smaller scale of individual characterisation. The benefits of approaching the poems in the context of the wider hexameter tradition have been amply demonstrated by the work of Burgess, Clay, Graziosi and Haubold, and Slatkin, amongst others. What this thesis contributes is a focus on the particulars of how this helps us to read Homeric characters, with a specific emphasis on how they fit into the repeated patterns of change which structure the traditional hexameter narrative of history. I have referred to this narrative both as "cosmic" history, because it encompasses the whole plan of the universe, and gods and men within it; and as "genealogical" history, because that plan is structured by the passing of each successive generation, creating a continuous thread of history reaching all the way back to the beginning to time, and all the way forward to the modern world of the poet and his audience.

In part I of my thesis, I demonstrate the extent to which the poems of Hesiod and Homer show awareness of a shared narrative of cosmic history, wherein the whole story of the world, the gods, and mankind is structured by a pattern of change over each generation. Over time, this structure of change takes men gradually further away from the gods, and makes us weaker and less powerful as individuals; but it simultaneously describes the strengthening of social institutions which allow us to live in a just, civilised world. While the *Theogony*, the *Works and Days*, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have their own particular narrative themes and priorities, I argue that they all have embedded within them the same narrative of genealogically-structured history, governed by the same overarching processes of large-scale change. This does not mean that the accounts of past time in the Hesiodic and Homeric poems map onto one another perfectly, but it does mean that we can see at work the same

overall patterns of change through history. For example, the Homeric poems do not refer to previous ages of men like the bronze race of the Hesiodic *Works and Days*, but the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* both have a clear conception of earlier generations being physically stronger, and closer to the gods – the same patterns of traditional history are in this way reflected across the different poems. Similarly, the *Iliad* does not look ahead to our own time in such a clear way as the Hesiodic description of the iron race – but the proleptic account of the destruction of the Achaean wall in book twelve shows that a great change will occur after the war, and men will be permanently separated not just from the heroes but also from the gods. I closed this part of the thesis with a case study of what this kind of change looks like with the passing of a single generation – the figures of Tydeus and his son Diomedes, as they are depicted in the *Iliad* and the remains of the Cycle, show that physical weakening, distancing from the gods, and social strengthening are detectable even on this small scale.

In part II of my thesis, I considered how these traditional patterns of history are reflected in, and inform, Homeric characterisation. These two chapters build upon the arguments of part I in order to show how awareness of traditional patterns can really make a difference to our reading of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. While each of the characters I have studied – Helen, Penelope and Telemachus – have been subject to extensive previous discussion, I argue that we can find better ways of understanding them by considering them in the context of traditional patterns of epic history. These characters have particular relevance to the aims of this thesis because they each exist at significant moments in traditional history: Helen at the very start of the Trojan war, and Penelope and Telemachus at the very end of the time of the heroes. My interpretation of these individuals shows how their positioning in the traditional epic timeline defines and gives depth to the presentation of their Homeric character.

The arguments of part II of my thesis do not have implications just for these particular characters, however, but for the very question of characterisation within the Homeric poems. My aim here has been to show that the oral-traditional nature of the poems, which articulates and transmits the shared narrative of cosmic history, is compatible with a literary interpretation of characterisation. Many theories of character in literature now accept that the presence of mimetic, anthropomorphic, psychologically recognisable figures is an essential aspect of any kind of narrative, as a key element both of the immediate "binding-in" of the

reader, and of the long-term success and popularity of a work.[1] This much is acknowledged in Griffin's seminal appreciation of Homeric character, and confirmed by many readers' personal reactions to the Homeric poems.[2] Yet, as I have argued in my Introduction, Griffin's defence of Homeric character is problematic, because it relies on a simultaneous attack on Parry and oral-traditional theory in general.[3] My thesis shows that Griffin's polemical stance against Parryism is not necessary in order to preserve the notion of individual character in the poems. Rather, the oral-traditional nature of the Homeric poems actively informs and enriches those characters: our understanding of the former helps us to appreciate the latter.

In chapter 3 I considered the character of Helen, first building a picture of how she is presented in the poems of Hesiod and the Cycle, and then assessing her depiction in the Homeric poems. It became clear that the wider hexameter tradition places Helen at a position of unique significance in cosmic history, as an instrument of Zeus' plan to bring an end to the era of the heroes. Because this is her overarching role and characteristic, there is no authoritative tradition of her parentage and family, and the resulting picture is that of an isolated and enigmatic figure. In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the destruction of the heroes is not itself the focus of the narrative, but we saw in part I that the Homeric poems are capable of containing implicitly the same ideas which in Hesiod are explicit. My interpretation of Helen in the Homeric poems, as a figure defined by isolation and self-hatred, reflects her role in traditional genealogical history, even though it does not deliberately refer to it.

While the Homeric Helen is shaped by the patterns of history which are beyond her control, in chapter 4 I considered two characters who are subject to not just one, but two competing forces. In the *Odyssey*, traditional patterns of historical change are in conflict with the poem's prevailing theme of Odysseus' return, and this has an impact on the characterisation of Penelope and Telemachus. Telemachus, at an age when he is growing from adolescence into adulthood, struggles to decide whether he should succeed his father or await his return; his journeys to Pylos and Sparta encourage him to mature into a man without posing a threat to his father's rule. The poet explores the possibility that Odysseus will not return successfully, but by the end of the poem Odysseus' return is complete and the tensions in Telemachus' character are left unresolved. The traditional patterns of change and

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[1] Frow (1986), Zajko (2006), Bal (2009) 112-131.
[2] Griffin (1980).
[3] See Introduction, 1-2.

succession are thus subordinated to the poem's specific concerns with *nostos*. A similar tension can be seen in the character of Penelope, who struggles throughout the poem to prevent change until her husband returns. I have argued that her attempts to freeze time are shown not just in the the famous trick of the shroud, but in her two death wishes, and her repeated scenes of sleep. Unlike her son, Penelope is released from this struggle on Odysseus' return. However, the problematic ending of the *Odyssey* confirms the difficulties of manipulating time in this way. While the *Odyssey* suspends the traditional narrative of genealogical history, it simultaneously demonstrates the importance of that narrative: without normal processes of change and succession, society disintegrates and even central characters such as Penelope and Telemachus become deeply problematic.

The coherence of traditional patterns of history across different hexameter poems means that the same approach could be applied to characters outside the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, too. My thesis has shown that an awareness of such patterns can help us read Homeric characters better, but it would be possible to extend this aim to incorporate the four major Homeric Hymns. Sowa argues that a lack of characterisation in the Hymns is a significant marker of difference from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.[4] Yet, they do contain presentations of compelling figures, albeit on a smaller scale than the Homeric poems, and a study along the lines suggested here would show that their portrayal of character is again shaped by a dynamic relationship with genealogical history. For example, we can see that both Aphrodite and Demeter suffer emotional anguish as a direct result of their position in that history: Aphrodite because she cannot offer immortality to Anchises, and is therefore tarnished with the shame of sleeping with a mortal (253-5); and Demeter because she cannot replace her lost daughter with a new divine child.[5] Just as I argue in this thesis that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* make use of traditional patterns of historical thought to form complex literary characterisation, I believe it would be possible to show that the same is true of the Homeric Hymns, thus adding to their growing reputation as valuable and interesting products of the hexameter tradition in their own right.

The purpose of this thesis has been to show that our modern understanding of the oral-traditional origins of the Homeric poems should not prevent us from interpreting them as

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[4] Sowa (1984).

[5] Clay (1989) 225-6 demonstrates that the episode at Eleusis is not an inorganic insertion in the Hymn, but "firmly links the poem to the theogonic and cosmogonic tradition of which it forms a part". I would argue that this link is expressed in the characterisation of Demeter, whose individual actions and reactions are prompted by her daughter's abduction and by the shifting relations between gods and men,

sophisticated pieces of literature. I hope to have shown that, rather than closing off avenues of interpretation, an awareness of the poems' roots in their oral tradition actually helps us to find new ways of understanding them. Although some oralists have denied even the possibility of individual characterisation in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the arguments of this thesis show that the poems contain complex, mimetic, and psychologically recognisable figures, exhibiting a range of emotions and reacting to their unique circumstances. Such rich presentation of character, I have argued, is achieved not despite the poems' oral background but because of it. The genealogical history of the hexameter corpus informs and shapes the characters within these poems, and our own reading of them is deepened and made more satisfactory when we see them in this context.

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