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Excerpt
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Part I **Homer**



1. δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς

Introduction

‘Homer’ suggests an answer which the maiden singers of Delos should give when they are asked who is the sweetest singer of all:

τυφλὸς ἀνὴρ, οἴκεϊ δὲ Χίῳ ἐνὶ παιπαλοέσση,
τοῦ πάσαι μετόπισθεν ἀριστεύουσιν ἀοιδαί.

He is a blind man, and lives in rocky Chios;
The best songs are all his, for all time.

Homeric Hymn to Delian Apollo, 172–3

This selection

Introductory passage: Akhilleus and Hektor (*Iliad* 22.1–130) page 6
Target passages: The death of Hektor (*Iliad* 22.131–end) page 23
Hektor and Andromakhe (*Iliad* 6.237–end) page 54

Homer and the Homeric poems

The *Iliad* (Ἰλιάς (ποίησις), the epic about Ilium (Ἴλιος, or Ἰλιον, the city of Ilos, otherwise known as Troy)) – the story of the wrath of Akhilleus and its resolution during one stage of the Trojan War – and the *Odyssey* (Ὀδύσσεια) – the story of Odysseus’ return home after the Trojan War – emerged in Ionia in substantially the form in which we now have them, around 700 BC. Their authorship was attributed to Homer (Ὅμηρος). Their composition owes much to a tradition of oral recitation extending back many hundreds of years, with the result that the poems are oral in style (even if writing played a part in their final shaping, a point of dispute). The main feature of an oral style of composition is the repetition of words, phrases, sentences and even whole scenes. Scholars are divided on the question of whether the same man was responsible for both epics, and in what sense the two epics offer an accurate historical perspective. The influence of the two epics on Greek thought was very considerable.

Background to the *Iliad*

Paris (more often called Alexandros), son of the Trojan King Priam, has abducted and taken back to Ilium Helen, wife of the Greek King Menelaos (note that the name of the town is Ilium, Ἴλιον in Greek; Troy – Τροίη – is the region). To win Helen back, Menelaos persuades his brother Agamemnon to lead an expedition of Greeks against Troy. Included in the expedition are such Greek heroes as Odysseus (Ulysses in Latin), Aias (Ajax), Diomedes, Patroklos and the greatest fighter of the Greeks, Akhilleus, son of the mortal man Peleus and divine Thetis, and close friend of Patroklos.

When the *Iliad* opens, a heaven-sent plague is spreading throughout the Greek army as it lays siege to Troy. Apollo has sent it, angry because Agamemnon has captured a Trojan girl, the daughter of the priest of Apollo, and refuses to allow her father to ransom her. Agamemnon releases the girl to stop the plague but, in accordance with his status and authority as leader of the expedition against Troy, demands in recompense (and gets) Briseis, a war-captive belonging to Akhilleus. When the furious Akhilleus withdraws from the fighting, taking with him his Myrmidon troops and his friend Patroklos, the Greeks are steadily driven back from Troy. Overtures to Akhilleus fail. When the Trojans reach and burn some Greek ships, Akhilleus permits Patroklos to return to the fray. But Patroklos is killed by Hektor, son of King Priam and Troy's greatest warrior. Akhilleus returns to the battlefield with revenge for Patroklos his only thought.

War and the *Iliad*

The context of the *Iliad* is war on the field of battle – between Greeks and Trojans, between hero and hero, between god and mortal. But the heart of the action is a human struggle of a different sort – in which the gods are centrally involved – and it is important not to allow the martial context to blur this essential point. Gabriel Germain writes:

I must ask the modern reader who wishes to feel the sweep of the *Iliad* to forget the feelings he has cultivated about war, whatever they are. For the bard, war is not material for theories or sentimentality. It is not a Judgement of God (though the gods wage it) or of History: it does not take the direction of an evolution, good or bad. It does not assume the divine rhythm of destruction and creation. Death on the field of battle is a simple reality which requires no commentary. It is confronted in the same way as the other crude realities of existence: they are accepted by the very fact that life is accepted. Homeric man never renounces life; that is why he has no 'problem' about death...

Considered thus, as a great phenomenon of nature, difficult for everyone at one time or another, painful for many, war is governed, at the level of man-to-man confrontation, by the law of the stronger. Such at least are the appearances as long as we do not see the supernatural background of events. It is here that the *Iliad* puts force at the centre of reality.

(Gabriel Germain, *Homer*, trs. Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press, 1960))

Further reading

M. Finkelberg, ed., *The Homeric Encyclopedia* (3 vols., Oxford University Press, 2011).
R. Fowler, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Homer* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).
B. Graziosi and J. Haubold, *Homer Iliad: VI* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).
Homer: The Iliad, tr. by Anthony Verity. Oxford World's Classics (Oxford University Press, 2011).
I. de Jong, *Homer Iliad: XXII* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).
M. M. Willcock, *A Commentary on Homer's Iliad* (2 vols., London: Macmillan, 1978–84).

Introductory passage: Akhilleus and Hektor (Iliad 22.1–130)

Introduction

Akhilleus, enraged by the death of Patroklos at the hands of the Trojan hero Hektor, has gone berserk, and single-handedly driven the Trojans back from the Greek lines towards Troy. The Trojans have been saved from complete rout by the intervention of Apollo who, disguising himself as the Trojan Agenor, diverted Akhilleus long enough for the Trojans to retreat within Troy's gates. This extract begins with Akhilleus railing at Apollo for deceiving him.

In Book 16, Homer describes the death of Patroklos at Hektor's hands and in Book 18 makes it clear that this was a tipping point: on hearing the news, Akhilleus decides to take his revenge on Hektor, even though he knows it will lead directly to his own death. Book 22 describes that revenge, after which Homer turns our attention to Priam and his family, who will have a major part to play in working out its consequences. This will culminate in Priam's night journey to the Greek camp to ransom his son's body. The poem will end with eulogies on Hektor by the three women in his life (Andromakhe, Hekabe and Helen), and his burial by the Trojans. Akhilleus' original anger will have run its course.

In line 25 the poet shows us Priam and his wife Hekabe watching Hektor and Akhilleus from the walls of Ilium. One effect of showing us their reactions to their son's plight is to concentrate our attention on the single combat they observe taking place below on the plain of Troy (and though Homer doesn't mention them, we can also imagine the rest of the Trojans watching from their city walls and the Greeks from their camp; the gods, as always, view mortal events as if in a theatre).

This episode is, unsurprisingly, the longest fight scene in the *Iliad* (ll.131–369) though only sixty-odd lines describe the actual fight. Homer intensifies its significance by means of a concentrated run of similes: seven of them, full of images of speed and brilliance. (Similes usually occur in Homer at moments of heightened action or emotion.) There are also ten speeches by characters on the mortal plane (six by Hektor, four by Akhilleus), and six by gods (two from Zeus and four from Athene), showing the intense interest of the immortals in the outcome of the human conflict. If that is not enough, we have the famous description of the chase around Troy, including what must be

one of the most poignant allusions to the former times of peace (Il.147–56),
'before the sons of the Akhaians came'.

1 *As the Trojans flee in terror back into the city of Troy, only Hektor remains outside the walls. Apollo taunts the furious Akhilleus. (1–24)*

ὥς οἱ μὲν κατὰ ἄστυ πεφυζότες ἤϋτε νεβροῖ
ἰδρῶ ἀπεψύχοντο πῖον τ' ἀκέοντό τε δίψαν,
κεκλιμένοι καλῆσιν ἐπάλξεσιν· αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιοὶ
τείχεος ἄσσον ἴσαν, σάκε' ὥμοισι κλίναντες.
Ἔκτορα δ' αὐτοῦ μείναι ὀλοῖη μοῖρα πέδησεν
Ἰλίου προπάρειθε πυλάων τε Σκαιάων.
αὐτὰρ Πηλεΐωνα προσήυδα Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων·
'τίπτε με, Πηλέος υἱέ, ποσὶν ταχέεσσι διώκεις,
αὐτὸς θνητὸς ἔων θεὸν ἄμβροτον; οὐδέ νύ πώ με

1 *ὥς like, thus, so
οἱ μὲν: who must these be?
πεφυζότες = perf. part. of φεύγω. A true perfect
like this indicates state, not action
νεβρός, ὁ fawn (2a). Why fawns?
2 ἰδρῶς (ἰδρώτ-), ὁ sweat (3a) (acc. ἰδρῶ)
ἀποψύχομαι I wipe off
πῖον = ἔπιον, no augment
ἀκέοντο: from ἀκέομαι I slake; no augment
again
δίψα, ἡ thirst (1c)
3 *κλίνω I lean (perf. part. pass. κεκλιμένος)
καλῆσιν: dat. pl. f. (Attic καλαῖς). The
battlements are not especially beautiful; καλός
is a general word of approval, 'fine, splendid'
ἐπαλξις, ἡ battlement (3e)
αὐτάρ: in contrast to οἱ μὲν
* Ἀχαιοί, οἱ Akhaians, Greeks (2a). Homer has
no word for Greeks, calling them Ἀχαιοί,
Ἀργεῖοι 'Argives', or Δαναοί 'Danaans'
4 ἄσσον nearer (+ gen.)
*ἴσαν = ἦσαν
σάκος, τό shield (3c)
κλίναντες: here (acti.) with an object
5 *Ἔκτωρ (Ἔκτορ-), ὁ Hektor (3a). Note his
emphatic position; he has to be isolated for
his single combat with Akhilleus. He will
fight not only for personal glory but also in
defence of his city and family; unlike
Akhilleus, he has wider social responsibilities
(see also l.541)
αὐτοῦ there
*ὀλο(ι)ός ἡ ὄν deadly
μείναι: the 'explanatory' or 'epexegetive' inf.,
which in Homer explains a nearby verb, here
πέδησεν, from πεδάω I shackle, i.e. it forced
him to stay

*μοῖρα, ἡ fate (1b): always in Homer one's
personal fate or destiny, not an overriding
force that affects everyone; frequently the
moment of death (see l.303, also l.61 αἴση)
πεδάω I shackle, hold fast
6 *Ἰλιον, τό (2b) or Ἰλιος, ἡ (2a) Ilium, Troy
προπάρειθε in front of (+ gen.); take with Ἰλίου
and πυλάων
*πυλή, ἡ gate (1a)
*Σκαιαί Skaian Gate (the Trojan gate
overlooking the plain, facing the Greek
camp, and a symbolic dividing line between
the spheres of war and peace; Hektor says
farewell to his wife here)
7 *Πηλείων (Πηλειων-), ὁ son of Peleus, Akhilleus
(3a)
προσαυδάω I address. The η here is the
augment
*Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων, ὁ Phoibos Apollo. Phoibos is
a title. Apollo supports the Trojans;
disguising himself as Agenor, a Trojan
warrior, he has been leading Akhilleus astray
in order to distract him from his wholesale
slaughter of the Trojans (21.596–611)
8 *τίπτε = τί ποτε, a surprised 'why'? Akhilleus
may be famously swift-footed in pursuit but
he is not fast enough to catch Apollo
*Πηλεύς, ὁ Peleus, father of Akhilleus (3g)
ποσὶν = dat. pl. of ποῦς
9 θνητὸς ἡ ὄν mortal
ἔων: the Ionic form of ὦν (from εἰμί); Homer's
dialect, a composite of more than one form
of Greek, is predominantly Ionic
ἄμβροτος ὄν immortal. What does θεὸν
ἄμβροτον agree with in l.8?
οὐδέ... πω = οὐδέπω, 'not yet'

ἔγνωσ' ὥς θεός εἰμι, σὺ δ' ἄσπερχές μενεαίνεις. 10
ἦ νύ τοι οὗ τι μέλει Τρώων πόνος, οὓς ἐφόβησας,
οἳ δὴ τοι εἰς ἄστυ ἄλυν, σὺ δὲ δεῦρο λιάσθης.
οὐ μέν με κτενέεις, ἐπεὶ οὗ τοι μόρσιμός εἰμι.
τὸν δὲ μέγ' ὀχθήσας προσέφη πόδας ὠκύς Ἀχιλλεύς·
ἔβλαψάς μ', ἐκάργε, θεῶν ὀλοώτατε πάντων, 15
ἐνθάδε νῦν τρέψας ἀπὸ τείχεος· ἦ κ' ἔτι πολλοὶ
γαῖαν ὀδᾶξ εἶλον πρὶν Ἴλιον εἰσαφικέσθαι.
νῦν δ' ἐμὲ μὲν μέγα κῦδος ἀφείλεο, τοὺς δὲ σάωσας
ῥήϊδίως, ἐπεὶ οὗ τι τίσιν γ' ἔδεισας ὀπίσσω.
ἦ σ' ἂν τεισαίμην, εἴ μοι δύναμῖς γε παρείη. 20
ὥς εἰπὼν προτὶ ἄστυ μέγα φρονέων ἐβεβήκει,
σευάμενος ὥς θ' ἵππος ἀεθλοφόρος σὺν ὄχεσφιν,
ὅς ῥά τε ῥεῖα θέησι τιταινόμενος πεδίοιο·
ὥς Ἀχιλλεύς λαιψηρὰ πόδας καὶ γούνατ' ἐνώμα.

- 10

ἔγνωσ': from γινώσκω
ἀσπερχές furiously
μενεαίνω I rage, am angry. People in Homer
are often said to be full of μένος, the root of
this verb. It seems to mean a kind of driving
force, often implanted (as strong feelings are
in Homer) from outside. We might call it
adrenaline
- 11

ἦ: a 'signpost' particle, showing that a strong
statement (or a surprised question) is
coming
τοι = σοι, dat. with μέλει
*Τρῶες, οἱ Trojans (3a)
πόνος, ὁ hard fighting, toil (2a); subject of μέλει
Τρώων: not the Trojans' toil, which Akhilleus
can hardly be expected to worry about, but
his toil in chasing them
φοβέω I put to flight
- 12

δῆ: directs attention to a statement, 'as you
can see' or Welsh 'look you'; does not
always need translation
τοι = σοι, as above, but here with the added
sense of 'as you can see', drawing attention
to a self-evident fact
ἄλυν [they] were shut in
λιάζομαι I withdraw, retire
- 13

μέν: not contrasted here with δέ, but meaning
'however'
κτενέεις: uncontracted (Ionic) form of fut. of
κτείνω
τοι = σοι, 'at your hands'
μόρσιμος destined for death. Gods of course
cannot be killed (though they can be
temporarily wounded, even by mortals).
Apollo ironically asserts his divinity; see
further on 1.16
- 14

τόν = τοῦτον. ὅς ἢ τό regularly occur in Homer
where Attic uses οὗτος αὕτη τοῦτο
*ὀχθέω I am angry
*ὠκύς εἶα ὑ (πόδας) swift (footed; πόδας = 'as
to his feet', acc. of respect); Akhilleus is
admired for his speed in pursuing an enemy
worsted in single combat
*Ἀχιλ(λ)εύς, ὁ Akhilleus (3g)
- 15

βλάπτω I delude, thwart
*ἐκάργος ὄν far-shooter (i.e. Apollo, the
archer god)
ὀλο(ι)ός ὄν deadly
- 16

τρέψας: take with με
ἦ for sure
κ' = κε: Homeric alternative to ἄν; take with
εἶλον. The unsaid 'if' part (protasis) of this
conditional sentence is implied by
Akhilleus' previous statement, i.e. 'if you
hadn't distracted me...'. The irony here is
that it is Apollo, through Paris, who will kill
Akhilleus (1.359)
- 17

ὀδᾶξ with the teeth
- 18

νῦν δέ: as often, following something that
might have happened but didn't, 'but as it
is...'
*κῦδος, τό glory, honour (3c). Like τιμή, this is
what the Homeric hero lives for, and
Akhilleus more than any. It is won above all
on the battlefield, killing another hero (or
many fighters). In an extended sense, like
κλέος, it lives on after a man's death in the
songs of bards
ἀφείλεο = uncontr. 2nd. s. aor. mid. of
ἀφαίρω, I take X (acc.) from Y (acc.)

- τοὺς δέ: who are these?
*σῶω I save
- 19 *ῥηδίων = ῥαδίων. Note the emphatic position
τι: acc. of respect, 'in any way'
*τίσις, ἡ revenge (3ε)
γ' = γε usually emphasizes the preceding word, i.e. (here) = 'well, being a god, you obviously weren't afraid of revenge...' Like many particles, it probably conveyed a tone of voice or a gesture
δεῖδω (δεισ-) I fear
ὀπίσσω in the future
- 20 ἦ: Akhilleus' speech is, as often, strong and assertive, even in the face of a god; though a mortal (albeit a powerful one), he is not afraid of Apollo. There is irony here, in that it is with Apollo's help that Paris will kill Akhilleus (see ll.359–60)
*τίνομαι (τι(ε)ισ-) I exact satisfaction from (+ acc.); a fut. unreal condition
παρέη: from πάρεστι
- 21 προτί = πρός
μέγα φρονέω I am proud
- ἐβεβήκει = plup. of βαίνω, which often suggests a stately or swaggering walk
- 22 σεύομαι (έσσυ-) I hurry
ὦς: actually ὡς, with ἵππος. It 'borrows' its accent from θ' (= τε), here the 'generic' τε = 'as everyone knows'. Cf. ll.23, 26, 27, 29, 30
ἀεθλόφορος prize-winning. This is the first simile in the book, introducing a run of similes drawn mostly from hunting/racing/chasing. Akhilleus is a winner because he is swift-footed
ὄχρα, τὰ chariot (3c). -φι is an ancient case-ending, whose function in classical Greek was taken over by the dat. Note that the reference is, as commonly, to chariot-racing, not to ridden horses
- 23 ῥα = ἄρα (+ ὅς = 'the very one which...')
ῥεῖα lightly, easily
θέησι: from θέω, I run
τιταίνομαι I pull, exert myself
*πεδίον, τό plain
- 24 λαίψηρα swiftly
νωμάω I move, ply; what tense is ἐνωμα?

2 Priam, king of Troy and Hektor's father, observes Akhilleus' onslaught and begs Hektor not to face him. (25–55)

- τὸν [δ' ὁ γέρων Πρίαμος πρῶτος ἶδεν ὀφθαλμοῖσι,
]παμφαίνονθ' ὥς τ' ἄστέρ' ἐπεσσύμενον πεδίοιο,
ὅς ῥα τ' ὀπώρας εἴσιν, ἀρίζηλοι δέ οἱ αὐγαὶ
φαίνονται πολλοῖσι μετ' ἀστράσι νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ·
ὄν τε κύν' ὤρίωνος ἐπὶ κλησιν καλέουσι.
λαμπρότατος μὲν ὁ γ' ἐστί, κακὸν δέ τε σῆμα τέτυκται,
- 25 *Πρίαμος, ὁ Priam, king of Troy (2a)
πρῶτος: i.e. Priam is the first Trojan on the walls to catch sight of Akhilleus in all his glory. He realizes in a moment what is going to happen
ἶδεν = εἶδεν, no augment
- 26 παμφαίνω I shine brightly. This brilliant simile, comparing Akhilleus to a natural phenomenon, emphasizes both his shining new armour and his deadly power (see l.27). He is often associated with imagery of fire and light. The star's threatening aspect is 'focalized' through the thoughts of Priam – this is how Priam sees him (see l.93)
ὥς τ' as in line 22.
*ἄστήρ (ἄστερ-), ὁ star (3a) (dat. pl. ἀστράσι). This is Sirius, the Dog Star, brightest of the fixed stars
*ἐπισεύομαι (έπέσσυ-) I sweep across (+ gen.)
- 27 ὀπώρα, ἡ autumn (1a); gen. of time 'within which'. Sirius rises in late summer/early autumn, at a time of oppressive heat, which was thought to bring on fevers
εἴσιν: s., so which verb does it come from?
ἀρίζηλος η on very bright
οἱ: dat. 'to it', i.e. 'its'
αὐγή, ἡ beam (1a)
- 28 νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ at dead of night
- 29 ὤρίωνος: Sirius is in the constellation Orion the hunter
ἐπὶ κλησιν καλέω I name; the subject of καλέουσι is 'they/men'
- 30 *λαμπρός ἁ ὄν bright
μὲν...δέ: note the strong contrast
γ' i.e. 'it is certainly very bright, but...'
σῆμα, τό sign (3b)
τεύχω (perf. τέτυγμα) I make, prepare (pass. 'be')



2. Walls of Troy

καί τε φέρει πολλοὶν πυρετὸν δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσιν·
ὥς τοῦ [χαλκὸς ἔλαμπε περὶ στήθεσσι] θεόντος.
ᾧμωξεν δ' ὁ γέρων, κεφαλὴν δ' ὅ γε κόψατο χερσὶν
ὑψόσ' ἀνασχόμενος, μέγα δ' οἰμῶξας ἐγεγώνει
λισσόμενος φίλον υἱόν· ὁ δὲ προπάροιθε πυλᾶων
ἐστήκει, ἄμοτον μεμαῶς Ἀχιλῆϊ μάχεσθαι·
τὸν δ' ὁ γέρων ἔλεεινὰ προσηύδα, χεῖρας ὀρεγνύς·
“Ἐκτορ, μὴ μοι μίμνε, φίλον τέκος, ἀνέρα τοῦτον
οἷος ἄνευθ' ἄλλων, ἵνα μὴ τάχα πτότμον ἐπίσπης
Πηλεΐωνι δαμείς, ἐπεὶ ἤ πολὺ φέρτερός ἐστι,
σχέτλιος· αἶθε θεοῖσι φίλος τοσσόνδε γένοιτο
ὅσσον ἐμοί· τάχα κέν ἐ κύνες καὶ γῦπες ἔδοιεν
κείμενον· ἤ κέ μοι αἰνὸν ἀπὸ πρᾶπίδων ἄχος ἔλθοι·
ὅς μ' υἱῶν πολλῶν τε καὶ ἐσθλῶν εὖνιν ἔθηκε,
κτείνων καὶ περναὺς νήσων ἔπι τηλεδαπᾶων.
καὶ γὰρ νῦν δύο παῖδε, Λυκάονα καὶ Πολύδωρον,
οὐ δύναμαι ἰδέειν Τρώων εἰς ἄστρῳ ἀλέντων,

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>31 πυρετός, ὁ fever (2a) δειλός ἢ ὄν wretched, cowardly</p> <p>32 ὦς...: when a poet working in the oral tradition goes on a digression (as in a simile) he has to remind his listeners when he is rejoining the narrative. Scholars call this technique 'ring-composition': 'as X... just</p> | <p>so did the bronze...' For an extended example, see ll.673–8</p> <p>τοῦ = τούτου *χαλκός, ὁ bronze (armour), sword (2a) *λάμπω I shine στήθος, τό (or στήθεα, τά) chest (3c uncontr.) 33 *οἰμῶζω I groan, lament</p> |
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