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INTRODUCTION

1 CONTEXTS

1.1 The Poetic Context

The *Iliad* is the earliest surviving work of Greek literature. It is, however, not an early work but a final product of a poetic tradition that may have been a thousand years old, when the poem was composed in more or less its present form, probably in the late eighth century BCE.[1] This poetic tradition was originally oral; there was no established, written text. A poet-singer (ἀοιδός) would create a new epic song (ἀοιδή) each time he sang, accompanying himself on the lyre and simultaneously composing and performing a mythological narrative about well-known characters and events in the meter, language, and style used by all poet-singers and familiar to their audiences.[2] Members of these audiences could recognize, interpret, and evaluate a poet's conformity to, or deviation from, metrical, linguistic, and stylistic norms and his fulfillment or disappointment of narrative, thematic, and ethical expectations.

The medium of traditional oral poetry was decisively and permanently altered by the introduction of a modified version (or versions) of the Phoenician alphabet into Greece in the late ninth or early eighth century.[3] It is reasonable to suppose that toward the end of the eighth century, at least one poet-singer trained in the oral poetic tradition composed a version of the *Iliad* in writing or dictated it to a scribe or amanuensis, taking advantage of the new medium to create a longer, more complex poem, richer in characterization and dramatic action, than would have been previously possible.[4] It is unclear how, and how often, such a transition from

[1] Henceforth, all dates are BCE, unless otherwise noted.

[2] The poet-singers and their audiences would not necessarily have considered the narratives mythological, as opposed to real, in the way modern readers do. Though set in a long past heroic age, these poems were considered to describe characters who lived and events that transpired in the same historical continuum in which the poets and audiences themselves lived.

[3] Powell 1991, 1997: 3. Inscriptions in Greek dating from the final decades of the eighth century are known from widely separated sites on the Greek mainland and in Euboia, Asia Minor, and Italy (Janko 2015).

[4] Wade-Gery 1952: 38–41 suggested that the alphabet was introduced into Greece specifically to create the Homeric epics; cf. Powell 1997: 29–32. Unlikely as this may seem, the suggestion calls attention to the importance of literacy for creating the *Iliad*. Janko 1992: 37–8 and 1998, following Lord 1960: 149 [= 3rd ed., 2019: 159] and Skafte Jensen 1980, thinks of the *Iliad* as an "oral-dictated text." Friedrich 2019: 167–244 argues for a "post-oral Homer" who became literate

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oral poetry to a written text took place. The *Iliad* as we have it is "likely to be the result of extremely complicated processes involving both orality and writing which we can no longer reconstruct,"[5] but which led to the existence of a fixed text in the late eighth century.[6]

Once a fixed text (or texts) came into existence, it is unlikely that the poem as we know it continued to be recomposed and transmitted orally for more than a short time. In an oral poetic tradition each composition in performance, even by a poet who believes he is singing the same poem he sang previously, yields a new and different work; within a few generations a creation as long as the *Iliad* would have been so altered as to be no longer the same.[7] Once writing was in play, the traditional language and form would have become relatively fixed, and from that point on rhapsodes (ῥαψωδοί, usually understood as 'stitchers of song', from ῥάπτω + ᾠδή, but also suggesting 'with staffs for (performing) song', from ῥάβδος + ᾠδή), would have begun to perform fixed, written texts.[8] By the fifth

in the course of his career. Čolaković 2006 and 2019, basing his discussions on detailed comparative studies of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and multiple south Slavic epics (especially the long poems of Avdo Međedović), concludes that, whether the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were oral, written, or dictated compositions, they should be understood as "post-traditional" epics by a poet who creatively adapted and combined traditional oral poems into longer, more complex, and "truer" works. See Danek 2012.

[5] Cassio 2002: 114, citing Haslam 1997: 87.

[6] Some scholars place the fixation of the text in the seventh century, either because examples of some kinds of artwork mentioned in the poem, e.g. the gorgon device on Agamemnon's shield (11.36–7), are attested for the first time only in the seventh century (West 1995: 210 = 2011: 196); or on the hypothesis that certain passages in the *Iliad* presuppose precisely dated events in the seventh century, e.g. 9.381–4, which supposedly would not have been written prior to the fall of Egyptian Thebes in 663 (Burkert 1976: 19 n. 42), and 7.442–64 and 12.17–33, both supposedly inspired by the destruction of Babylon in 689 (West 1995: 211–17 = 2011: 197–206). Others prefer a sixth-century date, usually in connection with the so-called "Pisistratean recension" at Athens, where the tyrant Peisistratos and his sons, who ruled the city between *c.* 560 and *c.* 510, are said to have made performance of the Homeric epics from beginning to end over several days, by rhapsodes performing in a kind of relay, a regular feature of the city's Panathenaic Festival. See [Plato] *Hipparchos* 228b6–c1, Cic. *De Or.* 3.137, Diog. Laert. 1.57, with Skafte Jensen 1980: 207–26, 2011, Andersen 2011: 668–9. The wording, however, of these ancient sources, actually suggests that a fixed, written "text of the *Iliad* more or less as we know it antedated the incorporation of the poems into the Pisistratean Panathenaia" (Cairns 2001: 3–4). A few scholars posit written transcriptions of oral performances from the late sixth through the fourth century, with full "crystallization" of the standard text only in the Hellenistic era (e.g. Nagy 1996: 107–10, 2009: 4–5, 2019: 83–7; Dué 2019: 11–12, 43).

[7] A. Parry 1966: 189; cf. Haslam 1997: 80–1.

[8] In sixth- and fifth-century written sources and on vases, rhapsodes carry a staff, while singers usually play the lyre (Graziosi 2002: 223). For possible uses of the staff in performance, see Kretler 2020: 29–33, 50–1, 335–41.

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century, rhapsodes were "essentially non-creative reciters of fixed texts," in contrast to creative poet-singers, but such a hard and fast distinction need not go back to the era when the text was first fixed in writing.[9] Hesiod says that the Muses "gave me a σκῆπτρον" (i.e. a 'staff', not a lyre) and "breathed a divine | voice into me, so I should glorify the things that will be and the things that were before" (Hes. *Theog.* 29–31), perhaps suggesting that they intended him to perform as a rhapsode. On the other hand, he also says that he and Homer "sang in Delos for the first time as 'bards' (ἀοιδοί), | stitching together a song (ῥάψαντες ἀοιδήν) in new hymns" (fr. 357.1–2 MW = fr. 297.1–2 Most).

The best known rhapsodes were the Homeridai (Ὁμηρίδαι, 'Descendants of Homer') on Chios, an island in the region where Homeric epic is likely to have developed and one of seven communities that claimed to be Homer's birthplace (cf. *HHAp* 172–3). These Homeridai seem to have been a professional guild of performers who, at least initially, not only claimed familial descent from Homer but were said to have composed and interpolated lines into his poems, which implies that they possessed written texts of them.[10] Other rhapsodes may have differed from the "descendants of Homer" in not being so strongly associated with one location. Plato represents the rhapsode Ion, in the dialogue of the same name, as an itinerant (ἰών) performer (for profit) of selections from Homer, sometimes in civic competitions and sometimes in private exhibitions.[11]

The poetic tradition of which the *Iliad* is a final product also gave rise to other epic poems composed at about the same time or slightly later (*c.* 700–650) in the same meter, language, and style; these include the *Odyssey*, Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, and the Homeric Hymns to Aphrodite, Apollo, and Demeter, though the *Hymn to Aphrodite* may well be as early as the *Iliad*.[12] The poems in the post-Homeric, so-called Epic Cycle also stemmed from this tradition, among them three epics, surviving in only a few fragments, on the story of Oedipus and the wars waged by his sons and grandsons, culminating in the sack of Thebes. The Epic Cycle also included six poems having to do with the Trojan War: *Kypria*, on the origin and first nine years of the war; *Aithiopis*, on the death of

[9] West 2011c: 745.

[10] See Σ Pind. *Nem.* 2.1, with Graziosi 2002: 212–17; Harpokration *Lex. s.v.* Ὁμηρίδαι.

[11] For discussion of rhapsodes and rhapsodic performance, see West 2010, González 2013, Ready and Tsagalis (eds.) 2018.

[12] These approximate dates are close to the range of possible dates in the relative chronology of early Greek epic suggested by Janko 1982: 231. On the date of *HHAphr*, see Janko 2012: 21, Schein 2016: 77–8. The Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* may be as late as the mid-late fifth century (Thomas 2020: 1–23).

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Achilles and the competition for his armor between Telamonian Ajax and Odysseus; *Ilias Mikra* (*Little Iliad*), on the story of the war from Odysseus being awarded the arms of Achilles to the fall of Troy; *Iliou Persis* (*Sack of Troy*), on the story of the wooden horse and the fall of Troy, apparently overlapping with the *Little Iliad*; *Nostoi* (*Returns Home*), about the post-war homecomings and failures to return home of various Greek heroes; *Telegony*, continuing the story of Odysseus from the point at which the *Odyssey* ends until his death at the hands of his son, Telegonos, and the marriages between Telegonos and Penelope and Telemachos and Circe.

These Cyclic epics were almost certainly composed as written texts in the seventh and sixth centuries, but like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* they were based on older oral mythological and poetic traditions. Along with the two Homeric epics, they told the story of the Trojan War from beginning to end. The Cyclic epics are known only from brief quotations and references in later authors and from plot summaries in the *Chrestomatheia* (*Summary of Useful Knowledge*) by the second-century CE grammarian Proklos,[13] which are quoted in the Venetus A manuscript of the *Iliad* (for all poems but the *Kypria*), in a dozen other *Iliad* manuscripts (for the *Kypria*), and in the *Bibliotheca* by the ninth-century CE scholar Photios (318b–22a).[14]

1.2 *The Historical Context*

The heroic age represented in Homeric epic corresponds in historical terms to the late Bronze Age (*c.* 1400–1200), the era of the final stages of the Mycenaean civilization on the Greek mainland. The approximate end of this era, *c.* 1200, is close in time to 1184, the date accepted by later Greek chronographers for the fall of Troy. It also coincides with the date of destruction, *c.* 1230–1190/80, of one of the cities whose remains have been found by archaeologists in superimposed layers at the historical site of Troy, near the Hellespont in northwestern Turkey. Many of these cities, however, were destroyed by earthquake or fire or possibly as the result of war, and there are different interpretations of which layer(s) might align with the Troy of epic.[15]

[13] The grammarian Proklos is not to be confused with the fifth-century CE philosopher of the same name.

[14] For texts of the fragments, summaries, and ancient references to the Cyclic epics, see Davies 1988: 27–76 (with translation and discussion in Davies 1989); Bernabé 1996: 36–105; West 2003: 64–171 (with translation). On the Epic Cycle generally, see Severyns 1928, Burgess 2001, 2011, Fantuzzi and Tsagalis (eds.) 2015.

[15] See Sherratt 2010: 3–5, Cline 2013: 85–102, Rose 2014: 8–43.

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In looking back to this era, the *Iliad* does not try to depict with historical accuracy the social and political institutions of late Bronze Age society as they can be reconstructed on the basis of the Linear B tablets from Knossos and Chania on Crete, and Pylos, Mycenae, Tiryns, Thebes, and other sites on the Greek mainland.[16] Nor does the poem refer to the Hittites, whose empire dominated much of western Asia Minor in the last half of the second millennium, even though archaeological and documentary evidence shows that the Hittites were in diplomatic, mercantile, and military contact with both the Greeks (*Ahhiyawa*) and the Trojans (*Wilusiya*) and that for some time Troy (*Wilusa*) may have been a Hittite ally or subject state.[17] The *Iliad*, however, does appear to have been influenced by, or at least shares motifs, themes, and values with, Hittite and other Mesopotamian literary texts. These may have been transmitted at the Chalkidian settlement at Al Mina in present-day Syria, at other eighth-century sites on the coast of Asia Minor, and /or in Cyprus, locations where archaeological discoveries have shown that Greeks and Mesopotamians were in cultural and commercial contact.[18]

The best known of these literary texts is the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, originally a Sumerian poem probably as old as the third millennium and extant in Akkadian, Babylonian, and other Mesopotamian versions dating from *c.* 1750 to *c.* 550.[19] *Gilgamesh* shares a number of motifs with the *Iliad*, including its conception of mortality as the defining feature of human existence; its interest in human heroism in a cosmos whose history, rule, and ordering by immortal gods were told in other epics and taken for granted; its part-divine, part-human main hero (Gilgamesh/Achilles), who experiences profound grief when his desire for glory leads to the death of his beloved warrior-companion (Enkidu/Patroklos), and this grief in turn leads the hero to a new understanding of the human condition. Gilgamesh learns what the *Iliad* also shows: that for human beings, however great, the memory of their heroic deeds is the only immortality possible. Both epics engage their readers not only by their main narrative but through speeches and extended similes, especially lion similes; they feature similar themes, such as male friendship and the intervention of

[16] See Bennet 1997.
[17] See Watkins 1984, Manning 1992: 137–8, Sherratt 2010: 10–11, 14–17, Beckman, Bryce, and Cline 2011, Cline 2013: 54–68, Bachvarova 2016, Bowie 2019: 21–30.
[18] See Webster 1958: 27–63, Heubeck 1979: 84–6, Powell 1997: 21, Morris 1997: 545.
[19] For an accessible and authoritative translation and introduction, see George 1999.

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immortal gods (whose motivation sometimes seems all-too-human) in the lives of mortals.[20]

The *Iliad* is superficially true to its late Bronze Age setting by describing arms and armor as (with few exceptions) made of bronze rather than iron and by excluding any reference to alphabetic writing, but it represents the social institutions and values of the heroic age from a contemporary, eighth-century perspective. For instance, Troy is called a *polis* ('city-state'), which in the eighth century denoted the main kind of self-governing, Greek social and political community.[21] While transmitting institutions and values associated with the kings, heroes, and heroic warfare of traditional poetry and mythology, the *Iliad* invites eighth-century (and later) audiences to respond critically to its representation of the heroic past in light of their own institutions and values.[22]

There are other signs of the poem's eighth-century date. For example, there are structural analogies between the *Iliad* and eighth-century geometric painted pottery, and the poem's language fits with what is known of the Greek language in that period.[23] In addition, the wide geographical range of Greek communities which the *Iliad* represents as having banded together to fight the Trojans, like its artificial mixture of spoken dialects from throughout the Greek world, is an eighth-century, "Panhellenic" phenomenon, like the founding of the Olympic games (traditionally in 776), the increasing prominence of oracular centers like Delphi and Dodona, the colonization in the Black Sea region, Sicily, and Italy, sometimes by city-states acting cooperatively, the spread of the Greek alphabet, the rise of literacy, and the apparently widespread circulation of Greek epic.[24] This circulation can be seen in the oldest surviving material evidence of the epic tradition, three lines of verse incised on a

[20] See Haubold 2002, 2013: 20–5, 39–49, 71–2, and Rutherford 2019: 231–6, each with further bibliography. For a thoroughgoing argument that the *Iliad* explicitly alludes to and engages with *Gilgamesh*, see Currie 2012: 543–80, 2016: 173–200, 215–17; Clarke 2019, with the sympathetic critique in Forte 2021.

[21] See Snodgrass 1971: 421, 435, 1980: 15–84; cf. Raaflaub 1997, Morris 1997, Grethlein 2010.

[22] Wofford 1992 argues that the poem, like later epics, transmits traditional institutions and values mainly in its narrative and calls them into question or critiques them mainly by its figurative language, especially its similes.

[23] Partly on the basis of similarities between the *Iliad* and eighth-century Geometric art, Schadewaldt 1965: 95–6 argues that the poem dates from the second half of the eighth century, and Schein 1984: 30–3, 1997: 348 from the final quarter. Janko's detailed, statistical analysis of developments in Homeric language and style suggests a date of *c.* 755/50–725 (Janko 1982: 231).

[24] On these "Panhellenic" phenomena, see Rohde 1925: 1.25–7, Nagy 1999: 7, citing Snodgrass 1971: 352, 376, 416–17, 421, 431.

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clay drinking cup (*kotyle*), probably made *c.* 730 on Rhodes in the eastern Aegean Sea but discovered in a tomb at Pithekoussai, on the island of Ischia in the Bay of Naples, a discovery suggesting the widespread diffusion of both the alphabet and epic poetry.[25]

This inscription, one word of which is uncertain, is written in the Chalkidian alphabet and consists of an iambic trimeter followed by two metrically correct epic hexameters: "<I am> [or <'this was'> or <'there was'>] the cup of Nestor, good to drink from; | but whoever drinks from this cup, immediately desire | will seize him for beautifully crowned Aphrodite."[26] These lines are the earliest surviving example of a kind of inscription, often suggesting the context of a symposium, in which an object names its owner.[27] They call to mind the description in *Il.* 11.632–7 of a "very beautiful cup" belonging to Nestor, fashioned with golden studs, four "ears" for handles, two golden doves on either side, and a double base, a cup which only Nestor could lift when it was full. This Iliadic cup, however, is a large, artistically wrought *krater* used for mixing wine with water, a valuable object, in contrast to the drinking cup from Pithekoussai, which is made of the most ordinary material. The inscription on the *kotyle* may allude directly and humorously to this Iliadic passage, but given the probable dates of the cup and of the epic, it more likely alludes to a description of a cup traditionally associated with Nestor in the oral poetic tradition, on which the *Iliad* too draws in the passage in Book 11.[28]

[25] See Cassio 2002: 105–6. Pithekoussai was the earliest Greek settlement in the west, jointly founded earlier in the eighth century by Chalkis and Eretria, the two main cities on the island of Euboia. See Strabo 5.4.9.

[26] The Chalkidian alphabet, apparently based on a Phoenician alphabet imported from Asia Minor, may have been the earliest Greek alphabet. For the importance of Chalkis and Euboia generally in the eighth-century "rise" of Homeric epic, see Schadewaldt 1965: 95–6, 107–15, M. West 1988, Powell 1997: 20–3, 30–1, and especially Lane Fox 2008.

[27] Danek 1994/5: 42–4, Pavese 1996.

[28] Such a cup might have been mentioned in a scene known from Proklos' summary of the Cyclic *Kypria*, in which Nestor entertains Menelaos, after Paris' abduction of Helen; see Currie 2015: 288. The *Kypria* is later than the *Iliad* (above, 3–4) but is based on traditional mythology with which Homer and the eighth-century maker and owner of the cup found in Pithekoussai presumably were familiar. See Kullmann 1960: 257, Danek 1994/5: 32–8. The metrical form of the inscription is appropriate to its humor: the mock-heroic epic *Margites*, attributed to Homer (Arist. *Poetics* 1448b28–32; cf. Callim. fr. 397 Pfeiffer, Zeno in Dio. Chrys. 53.4), was composed in the same "mixed" meter. For surviving fragments of *Margites*, see West 1992: 2.69–77, 2003: 246–51. For a range of interpretations of the inscription, see Schadewaldt 1965: 413–16, Heubeck 1974: 222–7, Hansen 1976, Watkins 1976, Powell 1991: 163–7, 208, S. West 1994, Faraone 1996, Pavese 1996.

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The long-past heroic age in which the *Iliad* is set can be identified with the era of the "better and more just, | divine race (γένος) of manly heroes, who are called | demi-gods (ἡμίθεοι)" (Hesiod *WD* 158–60). According to Hesiod's myth of the five ages of human existence (*WD* 109–201), the demi-gods lived between the era of the bronze race and the iron age in which "we" now live. These demi-gods fought and died at Thebes and Troy, and Zeus granted them a posthumous existence as "fortunate heroes" (ὄλβιοι ἥρωες) in the Isles of the Blessed (ἐν μακάρων νήσοισι) at the end of the earth (*WD* 161–73). The *Iliad* refers once to its warriors as "the race of men who are demi-gods" (12.23 ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν) and emphasizes the divine parentage of Achilles, Aineias, Sarpedon, and other heroes. Its original audiences were undoubtedly familiar with traditional conceptions of a heroic afterlife;[29] nevertheless, it programmatically avoids any reference to posthumous immortality, in accordance with its emphasis on mortality as the defining feature of the human condition.

Similarly, the *Iliad* nowhere refers explicitly to any "hero cult," although such cults were common from the Bronze Age through the archaic and classical periods and would certainly have been familiar to eighth-century audiences. In hero cults, mortals who had been great and powerful in their lifetimes were considered to live still and be powerful in the earth after death; they were worshipped at their burial places as "heroes" and protected the local social group, whose interests they represented and who offered tribute in the form of sacrifices and celebration in song. In the *Iliad*, one passage that may have suggested hero cult is the description of the burial of Sarpedon, whose "brothers and kinsmen will solemnly bury him | with tomb and stele, for this is the special honor of the dead" (16.456–7 = 674–5).[30] Normally in the poem, the mortality of its warrior heroes is absolute, and this mortality is what motivates them to fight and die in the effort to win tangible and intangible honor (τιμή) and glory (κλέος) (12.310–28).[31]

[29] E.g. life on the "Elysian plain" where Menelaos will go to live "the life that is easiest for mortals" (*Od.* 4.561–9), i.e. a life like a god's, because he is Helen's husband and Zeus's son-in-law; or life on the White Island, where Achilles is brought by his mother in the Cyclic *Aithiopis*, after she has snatched him from his funeral pyre (*Argumentum* 20–1 in Bernabé 1996 = 27–8 in Davies 1988).

[30] At 7.85, Hektor anticipates that the Greeks "will solemnly bury" his hypothetical opponent's corpse in a tomb beside the Hellespont, which will be visible in the future to those sailing by, reminding them that it was Hektor who killed him, and "my glory will never perish." Hektor, however, is concerned with the survival of his own reputation, not with his victim's cult status. (Nagy 1983: 204–5 with n. 51). The men of Hesiod's silver race survive death as "blessed mortals below the earth," i.e. as cult heroes receiving honor and worship at the sites of their graves (*WD* 140–2). On hero cult generally, see Antonaccio 1995, Mirto 2012: 7–8, 116–25.

[31] See Schein 1984: 70–6, Clarke 2004.

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2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE *ILIAD*

The *Iliad* is organized according to two complementary, mutually reinforcing artistic principles, one related to its traditional narrative and mythological content, the other to its symmetrical form and to eighth-century aesthetic norms.

The narrative moves linearly toward the death of Achilles and the fall of Troy, both of which, as Homer's audiences knew, will follow shortly after the burial of Hektor with which the *Iliad* concludes, and both of which are anticipated with increasing frequency in the course of the poem.[32] In the mortal world of the *Iliad*, the movement toward death is a one-way movement, an overriding reality that lends the poem much of its power as a representation of the human condition. Nevertheless, as Aristotle observed, unlike other epic poets who told in chronological order everything that was supposed to have happened in the course of the events they described, Homer organized the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* thematically, rather than chronologically, each around a single subject – the wrath of Achilles and its consequences and the man Odysseus and his return home – and gave them an organic unity in which, in the case of the *Iliad*, the death of Achilles and fall of Troy have no place.[33] Even so, most events in the poem are told in the order in which they occur; there is nothing like the extraordinarily complex narrative form of the *Odyssey*, with its multiple plots, its movement back and forth in time, its numerous internal narrators and narrative perspectives, and its constant change of locale.[34]

The poem's symmetrical or geometrical structure is one of "balance, responsion, contrast, and repetition, in an orderly syntax";[35] this structure is, in a sense, independent of the plot, and it can be seen, for example, in the frequently observed correspondence between the first three books of the poem and the last three. In Book 1 Agamemnon rejects the ransom brought by Chryses and refuses to release his daughter; in Book 24 Achilles accepts the ransom brought by Priam for his son's corpse. In each case Apollo is instrumental in setting the action in motion: at 1.43–52 he responds to Chryses' prayer by sending a plague against the Greek army; at 24.33–54 he begins the discussion among the gods that leads to Zeus's decision to have Achilles accept Priam's ransom and release Hektor's body. Furthermore, the scene on Olympos near the beginning of Book

[32] For the death of Achilles, see e.g. 1.352, 417, 505; 9.411, 410–16; 18.95, 98; 19.416–17; 22.359 (Griffin 1980: 163 n. 39). For the fall of Troy, see e.g. 4.163–5 = 6.447–9; 15.70–1; 22.59–71, 410–11; 24.727–30.

[33] Arist. *Poetics* 23.1459a30–b16; cf. 8.1451a22–9.

[34] Slatkin 1996: 223–4 = 2011: 139–40.

[35] Whitman 1958: 101.

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24 corresponds to the scene at the end of Book 1: each book includes a conversation between Zeus and Thetis, in which they discuss Achilles, and an intervention by Hera, whose wishes are overridden by Zeus.[36]

Even the pattern of days in the two books is almost exactly the same: in Book 1, the day of Chryses' coming to the Greek camp is followed by nine days of plague, one day in which Agamemnon takes Briseis from Achilles and the Greeks appease Apollo, and an eleven-day break until the gods return from the land of the Aithiopes, after which Thetis goes to Olympos on the twelfth day to supplicate Zeus; in Book 24, after Achilles mistreats Hektor's corpse for eleven days while the gods are divided about what to do, Zeus sends Iris to Priam on the twelfth day; the king goes to Achilles' shelter, ransoms Hektor, and returns to Troy with the corpse. Then come nine days in which the Trojans mourn Hektor and gather wood to burn his body, its cremation on the tenth day and burial on the eleventh, with the prospect of resumed fighting after that. The correspondence-in-reverse between the two books, though not exact (Book 1 covers twenty-two days and Book 24 covers twenty-four days of the fifty-one during which the *Iliad*, as a whole, takes place), effectively frames the poem's dramatic action.[37]

Books 2 and 23 and 3 and 22 correspond in less detailed but equally significant ways. Books 2 and 23 describe the assembled Greek army: the catalogue of ships and men in Book 2 introduces its leaders, the funeral games in Book 23 are a kind of farewell to them. The catalogue and the recollections by Odysseus (2.299–329) and Nestor (2.350–6) of the omens at Aulis and Kalchas' prophecies evoke the beginning of the war, while some of the successes and failures of particular heroes in the funeral games foreshadow their known mythological destinies following the war. Books 3 and 22 are clearly parallel to one another because of the duels between Paris and Menelaos and Hektor and Achilles. The former duel, the first single combat in the poem, is appropriate to and evokes the beginning of the war, while the latter duel, the poem's final single combat, resolves the war, because the death of Hektor is in effect the death of Troy (22.408–11). The scene in Book 3 in which Helen points out

[36] On correspondences between Books 1 and 24, see 13n.

[37] The five days between Book 1 and Book 24 include day 23 of the poem, the first day of fighting (Books 2–7); day 24, the second day of fighting (Book 8, with the events of that night described in Books 9–10); day 25, the third day of fighting (Books 11–18); day 26, the fourth day of fighting, including the killing of Hektor and mutilation of his corpse, followed by the events of that night, including Achilles' dream-vision of Patroklos (Books 19–23.225); day 27, the day of Patroklos' funeral and funeral games, followed by Achilles' sleepless night and further mutilation of the corpse (Book 23–24.21).

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