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HOMER AND THE QUESTION WHY*

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Abstract: Historiography's debt to Homer is immense, especially in exploring matters of cause and effect. The epics trace things back to beginnings, even if those are only 'hinges' in a still longer story; they use speech-exchanges not merely to characterise individuals but also to explore features of their society; the interaction of human and divine is complex, but the narrative focus characteristically rests more on the human level; allusiveness to narratives of earlier and later events also carries explanatory value. Epic and historiography alike also cast light on why readers find such aesthetic pleasure in stories of suffering, brutality, and death.

Keywords: Homer, historiography, causation, explanation, intertextuality.

It is no secret, and no surprise, that Greek historiography is steeped in Homer: how could it not be so? Epic was the great genre for the sweep of human experience, especially but not only in war; Homer was the narrator supreme. There have been many studies of the ways that individual historians exploit Homer to add depth to their work. I have contributed one myself on Herodotus,¹ Maria Fragoulaki writes in this volume on Thucydides, and others have covered writers down to and including the Second Sophistic.² Still, when completing a monograph on historical explanation in Herodotus,³ I was struck even more forcefully than before by how many of the characteristic interpretative techniques—not merely what they do, but how they do it—are already there in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. As the similarity of title shows, this paper is a companion piece to that book, though a full treatment would itself have swollen to monograph proportions, and the points have relevance to many other historical writers as well as Herodotus. Just as explanation is a multiple and complicated business, so the discussion here will have to range swiftly and sometimes dogmatically over some of the most disputed areas of Homeric scholarship. There will also be

* Many thanks to Simon Hornblower for his comments on an earlier draft.

¹ Pelling (2006), with references to previous scholarship.

² See now Hunter (2018). For Thucydides see also the overviews of Rengakos (2006) and Joho (2017); for imperial Greek, Kim (2010). The classic treatments are Strasburger (1972) and on the *Odyssey* Marincola (2007); recently Rutherford (2012) is outstanding.

³ *Herodotus and the Question Why*, henceforth *HQY* (= Pelling (2019)).

an imbalance between the *Iliad*, which will dominate the first three-quarters of the paper, and the *Odyssey*. (There may be reasons for that: see below, p. 22.) Homer is explaining events that we at least firmly regard as fictional, and the historians, at least most of the time, are not: that remains a crucial difference, for even if the Greeks ‘believed in their myths’ they may have believed *in a different way* from the way they believed in the truth of the Persian or Peloponnesian Wars.⁴ But Herodotus, and so many historical writers who followed him, knew where to find a model that would serve them well.

1. Beginnings

Sing, goddess of the wrath of Achilles son of Peleus, the baneful wrath that caused ten thousand pains for the Achaeans. It cast to Hades many strong souls of heroes, and made the men themselves prey for dogs and all the birds; and the plan of Zeus was being accomplished. Sing it from the point when they first stood apart in strife, the son of Atreus, lord of men, and godlike Achilles.⁵

Cause and effect are there from the first lines of the *Iliad*: it is a story of the wrath, *μῆνις*, that caused the Achaeans so many pains. That only takes us part of the way in the effects, as it will not be just Achaeans that will be sent down to Hades. Eventually the wrath will embrace Trojans too, and will be laid to rest only once Hector is dead and Achilles has found some peace with Priam in Book 24. But it already suggests points that will recur in the historians: the value, possibly the indispensability, of causal sequence in giving shape and intelligibility to a narrative; the centrality of warfare and strife, and the role of human emotion in driving them; and the way that proemial statements are literally first words, not the last word on any topic they introduce, and are there to be progressively refined and expanded as the story goes on.⁶

Renuancing starts early, as by line 5 we know this was not just a human narrative: *Διὸς δ’ ἐτελείετο βουλή*, ‘and the plan of Zeus was being accomplished’. Since antiquity it has been disputed exactly what is meant by that.⁷ Does ‘the plan of Zeus’ underlie everything, even before Achilles becomes wrathful and the plot-line of the *Iliad* begins? If so, is that because Zeus is writing the whole script for the war and everything was predetermined? Might this be a reference to the particular ‘plan of Zeus’ that we find

⁴ So Veyne (1988)—but the issues are complicated.

⁵ *Il.* 1.1–7. All translations are my own.

⁶ *HQT* ch. 5(c).

⁷ The alternative interpretations are distinguished particularly clearly by Clay (1999); cf. also Redfield (1979) 105–8 = (2001) 470–4.

as early as the *Cypria*, that Zeus planned the Trojan War as a way of easing the earth from over-population (*Cypr. fr. 1 W.*)?⁸ (The *Cypria* is probably later than Homer, and the over-population idea may have been conceived as an explanation of the Iliadic phrase itself,⁹ but it may be drawing on earlier traditions.)¹⁰ Or, as Aristarchus seems to have argued,¹¹ does this ‘plan’ only commence at the end of Book 1, when Achilles’ mother Thetis pleads with Zeus to ‘give victory to the Trojans, so that the Achaeans may pay my son back and enhance him with glory’ (1.509–10)? There is no single right answer to that question, ‘what does the plan of Zeus mean?’: all these interpretations are possible, and always were.¹² Homer’s audience, like those of the historians, are left to do some of the interpretative work themselves, and not everything is laid out for them from the start. But the important signal to the hearer or reader is that both dimensions matter, divine and human; that both have effects; and that explanations may be required on both levels.

In narrative, a starting-point is needed. The Muse is asked to take up the story¹³

from the point when they first stood divided in strife, the son of Atreus,
lord of men, and divine-blooded Achilles. (*Il.* 1.6–7)

So one looks for the beginning, a reflex that is again seen in, for instance, Herodotus’ very first chapters—what, or who, started it? A similar reflex explains why the ships that bore Paris and Helen to Troy can be called the ‘ships that started the troubles’, the *νῆας ... ἀρχεκάκους* (Hdt. 5.63), and the phrasing here to the Muse—take it up ‘from the point when’—intimates that

⁸ Thus Kullmann (1955). There are Mesopotamian parallels that date from well before Homer (Scodel (1982) 40–2; Burkert (1992) 100–6; M. L. West (1997) 480–2 and (2007) 23), strengthening the possibility that the idea was familiar to Homer and his audience: cf. Burgess (2001) 149 and Barker (2009) 44. Currie (2016) 1–2 plays with the idea of even *verbal* allusion here to a preceding poem or poems.

⁹ Thus Griffin (1977) 48 = (2001) 384, finding in the *Cypria* version ‘an idea ... of a distressing thinness and flatness, dissolving the *Iliad*’s imposing opaqueness to an all too perspicuous “rationality”’.

¹⁰ More on such issues later: see below, pp. 14–21.

¹¹ Cf. Kirk (1985) and Pulleyn (2000) ad loc.

¹² For similar open readings cf. Clay (1999); Burgess (2001) 149–50; Marks (2002) 16–19; and Allan (2008). Slatkin (1991) 118–22 suggests that a broader, more destructive plan can be seen as ‘distilled’ in Zeus’ intention to fulfil his promise to Thetis: similarly Murnaghan (1997) and Allan (2008) 208.

¹³ Unless the syntax of line 6 makes this a starting point within the longer-term ‘plan of Zeus’, identifying the time when the plan of Zeus began to take effect through the quarrel of Agamemnon and Achilles: so e.g. Redfield (1979) 96 = (2001) 458, and see the discussion of Marks (2002) 12–19. That would decide the interpretative question in favour of taking the ‘plan of Zeus’ further back than Thetis’ approach. There are, however, reasons why hearers were unlikely to take the words in this way: cf. Kullmann (1955) 167 and Pulleyn (2000) ad loc.

the story of the *Iliad* is part of a longer thread, presumably the Trojan War as a whole. Similarly those Herodotean ships mark a new phase within a much longer sequence of Greek and Persian interaction. In each case, though, this will be a particularly important point, a ‘hinge’.

The next reflex is to look to the gods (*Il.* 1.8–10):

And which of the gods was it that sent them together to fight in strife? It was the son of Leto and Zeus: for it was he who, angry with the king, roused a destructive plague throughout the army, destroying the people ...

So we look to the gods first, and we find Apollo. Still, that is not going back far enough, as we also need to know why he sent that plague, and this means returning to the human level (*Il.* 1.11–16):

... because the son of Atreus dishonoured the priest Chryses: for he had come to the swift ships of the Achaeans to ransom his daughter, bringing a boundless ransom and carrying in his hands the fillets of far-darting Apollo on a golden sceptre, and he made his plea to all the Achaeans, and particularly the two sons of Atreus, commanders of the people ...

Human level and divine level are intersecting closely. And we have swiftly reached the point where, on the face of it, no further explanation is needed:¹⁴ there is no difficulty in understanding why Chryses wants his daughter back, nor why Apollo responds so decisively to the insult to his priest who has served him well in the past (1.37–42). Perhaps we might, with another person, have needed something to explain why Agamemnon rejected the plea when ‘all the other Achaeans’ (1.22) spoke up for accepting it; but if the initial hearers did not know their Agamemnon already from other songs, they are quickly given enough information here by the brutal dismissiveness with which he speaks—get out of here, old man, and don’t come back, as your priestly garlands won’t save you next time; your daughter will grow old with me in Argos, far from her home (note the twisting of the knife¹⁵), working at the loom and serving my bed (1.26–32). Character-explanation, then, and ‘shown’ (rather than ‘told’) through the narrative. Agamemnon is just that sort of man.¹⁶

¹⁴ Cf. *HQT* ch. 1[f].

¹⁵ The scholiast notes that ‘he wounds the old man by gradually increasing her separation from him’: Griffin (1980a) 107. Cf. also Kakridis (1971) 130–1.

¹⁶ It requires an excess of goodwill to accept, as some (e.g. Alden (2000) 211–2 and in a way also Dodds (1951) 1–27, esp. 2–3) have done, Agamemnon’s own later claim that he was blinded by *atē* (19.87), and therefore acting abnormally: cf. below, p. 7 and n. 29. At least, the narrative here and elsewhere suggests that he is the sort of man likely to suffer from this particular sort of (in Dodds’ phrase) ‘psychic intervention’.

What does need further explanation is why and how this escalates to the degree it does, and inspires that deathly ‘wrath’: again we might compare the rhythm of Herodotus’ first few chapters, where a crucial point comes when the Greeks are ‘greatly to blame’ for escalating the exchanges so bloodily (1.4.1). In the *Iliad* this requires the account of the assembly (1.53–305),¹⁷ which so marvellously conveys that this was a quarrel waiting to happen, that the story does *not* in fact start here, despite that implication that it was now that ‘they first stood divided in strife’ (1.6). This comes partly from the dynamic of the exchanges (another feature that the historians will often reproduce in their interest in how people speak): these include the way that Achilles leaps in, first taking the initiative to call the assembly at all (1.54)—should that not have been Agamemnon’s job?—then being unnecessarily provocative when he promises to defend Calchas if he causes offence to a man of power: ‘not even if you mean Agamemnon, with his claim to be by far the best of the Achaeans’ (1.85–91). Of course Calchas means Agamemnon, and everyone knows it: but it did not need to be said out loud. Then there are several other points when an Odysseus, say, might have responded differently, or a Nestor had he got a word in earlier:¹⁸ once Agamemnon has calmed down sufficiently to agree to give the girl back provided he gets another in exchange, it was not tactful to point out the practical difficulties in such detail (122–9), nor then to ignore the semi-diplomatic ‘but we can sort this out later ...’ (140). Soon both are trading high-grade insults, culminating in the magnificent ‘heavy with wine, with the eyes of a dog and the heart of a deer’ (225, cf. 122, 146, 149, 158). The ‘always’ of quarrels¹⁹ keeps coming too—I always do all the work, and you always get the pick of the prizes (162–8); you’re always one for strife and fighting and battles (177); you never have the guts to come into battle or lie in ambush yourself (226–8). And what of Agamemnon’s ‘don’t try to deceive me, as you won’t get away with it’ (132)? Why should Agamemnon suspect deceit, unless there is some back-story here? Achilles will respond with similar suspicions in Book 9 (345, 371, 375). This is clearly a simmering antagonism, just waiting to burst out. The dynamic of spoken exchange reveals the deeper factors at play—and here too we shall find the historians to be masters of the same technique, whether we think of Herodotus’ council of Xerxes, Thucydides’ Nicias and Alcibiades, or Xenophon’s Critias and Theramenes.

Another feature that will recur in the historians is the light cast not just on the individuals but also on the societal structure in which they operate. Here it is one of the Greek camp, with its uncomfortable coalition of kings and princes; in Herodotus it will often be that of the Persian court, though

¹⁷ For a recent analysis see Barker (2009) 40–52, with references to earlier literature.

¹⁸ Cf. Redfield (1975) 12–14.

¹⁹ Thus Macleod (1982) 96 on *Il.* 24.62: ‘αἰέν as used here is the typical “you always ...” of quarrels, which Homer as a keen student of life, reproduces ...’. Cf. de Jong (2001) 552 on *Od.* 23.103; Kullmann (2001) 396 and n. 32.

we will see a fragile Greek coalition as well; in Thucydides and Xenophon it will be, among other things, the nature of Athenian democracy and its difficulties in dealing with its big men; in Polybius the discomfort of Greece as it learns to live with Roman domination. It does not take much to sense the fundamental tension that comes because Agamemnon is not the best warrior and the best warrior is not in command. That insight will be reinforced towards the end of Book 1, when we see the divine world in which Zeus does have the power to impose his will, and authority and physical might are united.²⁰ It is exactly that contrast between authority and might that is pointed by those early words ‘the son of Atreus, lord of men, and divine-blooded Achilles’ (1.7),²¹ where the striking quality of the expression is accentuated through the move of the phrase ‘lord of men’, *ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν*, to sit in an unaccustomed position in the line, thus defamiliarising what was doubtless already a familiar formula.²² In this world of massive male egos, that sort of unease can be relied upon to cause problems, sooner or later, and the trigger has now been pulled.

There is no shortage of blame, then, as Achilles and Agamemnon pile up the reasons why the other one is in the wrong; nor will there be any shortage when we move to the divine level, with Hera and Zeus each finding fault with the other (1.540–3, 561–7, with another quarrelling ‘always’ in each case). And blame there will be in plenty later in the poem as well, on the Trojan side as well as the Greek. The Trojans blame Paris (3.38–57, 3.453–4, 6.280–5, 6.525, even the herald Idaeus at 7.385–97). They blame Helen too, so Helen herself tells us (24.768–75). Helen blames herself, though not without a touch of manipulation—she is especially good with older or more powerful men (3.171–80, 6.344–59). Hector blames himself too, for the mistake of camping one night too many in the plain (22.104). On the Greek side, Thersites’ blame is uncompromising, and directed at Agamemnon (2.225–42). The god Poseidon blames Agamemnon too (13.108, 111–3); so does Patroclus (16.273–4); so, by implication, does Odysseus, picking the right moment to say it to Agamemnon’s face (19.181–2). Phoenix tells Achilles himself that his anger would be reasonable, but for the fact that Agamemnon was now making his offer of recompense (9.515–23): on that view it is in Book 9, not Book 1, that Achilles is going too far.²³ No such fine distinctions, though, for Achilles himself, especially once Patroclus is dead: he just blames himself, deeply (18.97–126).

Nor is blameworthiness without its explanatory force: it doubtless matters that Paris was in the wrong, and that goes towards explaining the outcome

²⁰ Again a parallel that comes back in the historians, though more rarely: cf. Zali (2015) 121–3 on Zeus’ authority in the *Iliad* as a *comparandum* with that of Persian monarchs.

²¹ Parry (1972) 2–6; Griffin (1980a) 11, 52–3.

²² Parry (1972) 5–6. Elsewhere always in the *sedes* of *ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων* (or *-ων*), 44x; 5x with other figures, but always in that same *sedes*.

²³ That view can still attract: it is firmly espoused by Apfel (2011) 226–7.

of the war,²⁴ just as Pandarus' oath-breaking transgression of the truce in Book 4 allows Agamemnon to express his conviction that Troy will fall (4.158–68, 234–9). Others agree with him, Trojan (7.351–3) as well as Greek (4.269–71, 13.624–5). Still, for the plot-developments that absorb the reader or listener most, the deeper significance of blame is in the light it casts on the blamers and their interaction.²⁵ In understanding how the quarrel escalates, it does not matter how much *we* blame Achilles or Agamemnon, it matters how much they are blaming each other. In the terrible tirade which Achilles launches against himself in Book 18 (98–126), blaming himself for his wrath and for letting Patroclus and his Myrmidons down, it similarly does not matter whether he is right: it matters that he feels that way, throwing blame at himself as he is so ready to throw it at others (11.654, 21.275–8), and that his feelings are now driving him back furiously to the fight. That again will come back in Herodotus and later: despite the 'blame' and 'grievance' connotations of *αἰτίη*-language, it is the human dynamics of the blaming itself that help us most to understand.²⁶ Thucydides can then certainly ascribe blame: the allies were themselves to blame for their subjection to Athens (1.99.2). But it may eventually be more important that 'the majority' of Greeks were angry with the Athenians, blaming them for their behaviour, and favoured the Spartan 'liberators' (2.8.4–5); just as for Xenophon the speeches of the Theban ambassadors and of the Athenian Autocles reveal the widespread bitterness against imperial Sparta a generation or so later (*Hell.* 3.5.8–15, also acknowledging at §10 that Athens in its heyday aroused the same response, and 6.3.7–9).

In the *Iliad* even those questions of war-guilt are complicated, because—once again—of the gods. When they meet on the walls Priam tells Helen (*Il.* 3.164–5)

I don't hold you to blame, I blame the gods, who launched on me this dreadful war with the Achaeans ...

Of course, this is characterising²⁷ (just as it characterises Croesus when he echoes Priam's words with Adrastus, *Hdt.* 1.45.2). 'If a human being finds it useful, the gods can be to blame for everything,'²⁸ but not everyone would

²⁴ As is emphasised by Lloyd-Jones (1971) 7–8 and others, e.g. Allan (2006).

²⁵ This therefore relates to the remark of Kullmann (2001) 390 that 'past and future are emphasized far more in the epic characters' direct speech than in narrative'. The past becomes relevant through what people think and say about it.

²⁶ *HQY* chs. 1[b], 2, and 8[c].

²⁷ A point elaborated by Roisman (2005) 108–9, who builds a broader psychological picture of the old men who are trying to make themselves agreeable to the beautiful young woman.

²⁸ Lesky (2001) 195.

let Helen off so lightly; not everyone did (24.768–75). Priam is being as soft on Helen as Agamemnon is soft on himself when he claims (*Il.* 19.86–8)

I am not to blame: it is Zeus and Moira and the Erinys who walks in mist, who cast fierce *atē* [craziness, delusion] into my mind in the assembly ...

What a contrast with Achilles in the previous book! Agamemnon will do what he can to let himself off blame,²⁹ Achilles takes all the blame possible on to himself. Once again blame-throwing is most relevant for what it tells us about humans and their relationship.³⁰ But both moves, Priam's and Agamemnon's, are possible because of that complex interaction of human and divine levels. That is a theme that will return often enough in the historians,³¹ and deserves a fuller (though still fleeting) discussion in the next section. For the moment, let us just note that, if we wish to explain the most absorbing events in Homer and make them intelligible, then those explanations may *draw on* the blame that is in the air, but will typically do so in the interest of exploring human psychology and the dynamic of human interchange. Again, the historians will not be very different.

2. Gods and Humans

Διὸς δ' ἔτελείετο βουλή, 'and the plan of Zeus was being accomplished' (1.5): we have already seen that, however ambiguous and enigmatic the wording, the phrase points to the importance of both levels, human and divine. *How* the two combine is another question, and the answer may not always be the same; indeed, they may not always be combining at all. It always makes sense to look for explanations on both the human and divine level, but it does not follow that both explanations are always there, or always equally valid. This is what makes it possible for Priam or Agamemnon to deflect blame in the way we have just seen; and, even in a less charged and less characterising setting, Idomeneus can judge, on the whole accurately, that a Greek reverse

²⁹ I here find myself in sympathy with Versnel (2011) 169–74. In more depressed mood, Agamemnon struck a different note the day before when talking to the elders (9.119). Cf. esp. Lesky (2001) 195–8. Perhaps, it is true, we ought to distinguish blame from (something like) 'responsibility'. Agamemnon does not deny that it was his action and he must bear the consequences for it, in this case by paying recompense (19.137–8): cf. Dodds (1951) 3, and Lesky (2001) 193: 'the divine impetus to an action or a god's collaboration with the human being does not reduce the latter's responsibility in the slightest'. So there is a further sense in which 'who started it' is already dissociated from 'who is to blame'.

³⁰ And not just human: Hephaestus claims not to be so much *aitios* himself for what is happening when he fights the river; it is more the other gods that are helping the Trojans, 21.370–1. The blame game is as natural for gods to play as humans.

³¹ For Herodotus, see *HQI* ch. 10.

is to be explained by the wishes of Zeus rather than by any slacking on the human level (13.221–7).

Even when both levels are present, their interaction can take different forms.³² Sometimes they seem to be largely independent ways of looking at things, with no identifiable physical interaction at all; sometimes a god may intervene directly to lure or to slap or just to inject some *μένος* (what the Welsh would call *hwyl*); sometimes he or she will take human form, and give verbal encouragement in a strikingly successful way; sometimes the effect is more indirect, with Zeus simply giving victory to one side or another without apparently needing any physical action. It can be hard to tell. If Zeus raises his scales and they come down one way (8.69–77, 16.658, 19.223, 22.209–13), is that to *cause* what is to happen (like a cook weighing out ingredients) or just to *gauge* it (like a human apprehensively checking his or her own weight)? Sometimes it seems more the one, sometimes the other;³³ and if we as readers cannot always tell how or how far the gods are active, the effect is partly mimetic, plunging us into the same sort of uncertainty as the characters in the poem. All we know is that the gods cannot be ignored, and this is often all the human characters know too (Achilles, with his special access to the gods through Thetis, is here a partial exception); and that if we need a full explanation of events, we need to work on the gods' level as well as our own.

That is also true on the macro-level of the war itself. Why do the Greeks win? On one level, because the more powerful gods are on their side, and because Hera and Athena are still implacably offended by the judgement of Paris (24.25–30, interestingly delayed until very late in the poem: see below, p. 15). On another, it is because the Greeks have the bigger numbers (2.126–8, cf. 799–801) and the better warriors. When the two sides swing into action at the beginning of the poem's fighting, the Trojans are chattering bird-like while the Greeks move in grim silence (3.1–9). We can already see who look like the winners.

When the two levels do interact, sometimes it is human decisions that trigger divine debate and action in response, and sometimes it is the other way round. Either way, though, it is usually the human level that is the more interesting. When Athena intervenes mid-quarrel in Book 1 to check Achilles as he is drawing his sword, in one way this is simply an essential narrative

³² The classic exposition of Lesky (2001; first published 1961) is still basic reading on 'the wealth of variations' (188) with which this 'fusion' (184) is conceived. Versnel (2011) 163–78 is also right to object to the scholarly tradition of seeking too neat and systematic a synthesis.

³³ More as cause: 16.658, where the imagery is continued in Zeus 'stretching' (*τανύω*, just as *πιταίνω* is often used of the holding up of the scales and letting each side of the balance stretch down) 'a mighty strife', and at 656, 662, and 688 Zeus does seem to be causing what happens. But at 8.69–77 and 22.209–13 matters are more ambivalent and complex. I leave aside the question whether such weighing also evokes the weighing of the fates of Achilles and Memnon, a frequent theme of Greek art and later the subject of Aeschylus' *Psychostasia*, as Neoanalyst scholars (below, n. 68) have often claimed (Burgess (2009) 88–9, with further references).

ploy. Achilles cannot be allowed either to strike Agamemnon down (that would make it a rather short poem) or to weigh it all up and decide that on the whole this would be a bad idea, which would be disastrous for his characterisation. But the way Athena does it remains telling (*Il.* 1.207–14):

‘I have come from Heaven to stop your fury, *if you will obey me*: for white-armed Hera sent me, as she loves and cares for both of you. Come, put the strife aside, and do not draw your sword; instead, insult him, tell him how it is going to be—for I will tell you this, and it will certainly happen: some day he will give you three times as many glorious gifts because of the outrageous way he is treating you now. Hold back, *obey us*.’

‘If you will obey us ...’—and the Greek word is *πειθομαι*, as much ‘be persuaded’ as ‘obey’. It is the same phrase as Thetis uses of her hopes that Zeus will be persuaded to do what she and Achilles want (*αἴ κε πίθηται*, 1.420 ~ *αἴ κε πίθηαι*, 1.207), and there is no doubt that Zeus has the power to refuse. Like Thetis there, Athena finds arguments that she thinks will be persuasive, as well as in this case providing Achilles with ammunition for his next torrent of abuse. But it is up to him.³⁴

This is not a case where we can subtract a piece of divine action from the narrative and think it still makes sense, any more than we can somehow rationalise away the moments when Aphrodite or Poseidon or Apollo whisks a warrior away from the fighting or covers him in mist (3.374–82, 5.311–7, 20.318–29, 443–4, 21.597–8)—or when Apollo sends a shower of rain to save Croesus (*Hdt.* 1.87.1–2). Still, the main interest falls not on the god’s indispensable action—that is easy to understand, for ‘Hera sent her, loving both men equally and caring for them’ (1.196)—but on the human side, even the human psychology. But how? It is not in the crude sense that Athena’s words are somehow an external counterpart or correlative of what is going through Achilles’ own head, as some scholars used to claim.³⁵ She gives him information that he would not otherwise have, and has no reason to guess: if he holds back, he will get ‘three times as many gifts’. Yet Achilles, of all people, is not the man to weigh up his self-interest at a moment like this, and decide that if he plays his cards right, he might do rather well out of this. In his reply he does not mention these gifts, simply saying that it is wise to obey the gods if one wants their support (1.216–8); nor does he say anything about them in his next tirade, content to promise Agamemnon in memorable language that he will regret what he has done when many of his men are dying at Hector’s hands (1.225–44)—Hector’s first mention in the poem,

³⁴ As Griffin (1980a) 160 puts it, ‘she appeals courteously to his reason’. Cf. Lesky (2001) 188–9; Pulleyn (2000) 185 ad loc.

³⁵ Notably Dodds (1951) 14 and Kirk (1974) 292. This approach is effectively criticised by Griffin (1980a) 147–8 n. 8 and 158–60; see also Pulleyn (2000) 176–7 and Rutherford (2013) 68–9.

ironically as the potential instrument of Achilles' wrath when he will finally be its target.

No: the interest is not in the way that Athena reflects or understands Achilles' mind, but in the way that she does not. She misreads him: if Achilles were not able even at a time like this to control himself out of respect, he would probably answer 'this is *not* just about gifts', just as in Book 9 Agamemnon's immense catalogue of offered gifts is not enough to win him back while in Book 24 Priam's offer, however kingly, is much less massive than Agamemnon's but is still effective. True honour embraces material wealth as a token of that respect, but is not reducible to it. The dynamic is similar on the human level. Nestor's bland summary—'even if you are a mighty man—a goddess mother bore you—he is still the superior man, because he rules over more men' (1.280–1)—is not likely to impress Achilles, but again Achilles has too much respect here for the peacemaker, this time the human peacemaker Nestor, to burst out 'no, he isn't: he's not the better man at all'—a view with which the Homeric narrator would probably have agreed, to judge from his description of Achilles as *φέρτατος* ('best') at 2.769, the superlative that trumps the comparative *φέρτερος* ('superior') here. Nor are these the only times in the early books where generalisations may sound sage but are inadequate to the moral complexities, not unlike the manner of many tragic choruses. Odysseus' defence of kingship in Book 2 is similarly facile, even if it is the right thing to say at the time (2.196–7, 204–6).

What emerges, then, is that even those with most goodwill and most insight—the goddess of wisdom, the man of years—are failing to understand Achilles' mind, and it is this human psychology that is most absorbing. The listener or reader may well understand it better than the characters in the text, even at this early stage when we have known this particular Achilles only for a few hundred lines. This prefigures further features too that we will often see in the historians, whether or not the gods are then involved: the importance of the dynamic of debate in capturing the texture of relationships, how and how well and how badly the society or its leadership is functioning; and the way in which those closest to events may not gauge the crucial aspects of a predicament well, may indeed be too close and too passionate to see what matters most. Take Herodotus again: Candaules will be obsessed with his wife's beauty (1.8–12), the Peloponnesians with the Isthmus wall (9.8.2), the Athenians with their loathing for Aegina (7.144)—and in each case more perceptive observers in the text gauge matters better, and Herodotus helps his readers and hearers to gauge them too. We could say the same about the Athenians' rage against Pericles when they see their land destroyed (Thuc. 2.20–2, 59, 65.2–3) or their anger with the generals after the battle of Arginusae for not doing more to pick up survivors (Xen. *Hell.* 1.7). The external audience—we—have access to various perspectives to help us grasp things better, not least an awareness of where things are heading so that we know what needs explaining. But one of our advantages

is that of emotional distance, which can paradoxically help the understanding even of emotion itself.

Historians will have to explain not merely where wars and conflicts come from, but also why they end in the way that they do. That too is already the case in the *Iliad*, and here again the divine-human interplay is important as Achilles comes to terms with his wrath. The movement in Book 24 reverses that of Book 1, this time first a divine meeting and then a human one. Zeus sends Thetis to tell Achilles that the gods are angry with him, and to see ‘if perhaps he might fear me and ransom Hector’ (24.116)—a mingle of politeness and threat (‘fear me’), certainly, but again emphasising that it is up to him. Meanwhile and symmetrically, he sends Iris to tell Priam to go to the ships and offer gifts (24.117–9), something that closely reflects Priam’s own instinctive reaction as soon as Hector dies (22.416–8).

So it is all set up, one might think, and there is not much left for the humans themselves to achieve. And yet there is. Thetis passes on the message to Achilles, and Achilles acknowledges the need to accept (24.139–40):

So be it: let the man who brings the ransom take the dead body, if this is what Olympian Zeus himself is ordering.

It sounds like a wry, almost black-humoured tweaking of a proverb: ‘you pays your money and you takes your ... corpse’. But it also brings out what Achilles has *not* been told, that it will be Priam himself who comes. Meanwhile, Iris tells Priam to make the journey: once he gets there,

he will not kill you himself and he will stop everyone else from doing so. For he is not a mindless or thoughtless or transgressive man, but he will take great care in sparing a suppliant. (24.157–8)

He is not the man to kill a suppliant? Really? We have seen him killing suppliants in plenty in this late phase of the war, most memorably Lycaon at 21.64–119; and the dying Hector too had begged him ‘by his soul and his knees and his parents’, and been rebuffed (22.338, 345). If this is the best reassurance Iris can give, one can understand why Hecuba (24.206–8) and ‘all his friends’ (24.327–8) think he is going to his death, and why Priam himself is prepared to accept that (24.224–7). For he too has not been told something crucial: Iris has not told him that the gods have intervened with Achilles too. The only divine role she mentions is that Hermes will see him safe until he gets to the tent (24.153–4). After that, he is on his own.

Yet these two points—that Priam himself will come, that he has no adequate divine guarantee that he will be safe—are going to be vital elements in the human drama in the tent. Priam is no Agamemnon, letting others do his work for him in Book 9; he faces the terrifying man himself. Achilles is dumbstruck as Priam appears; he is lost in *θάμβος*, wonder, and so are all around (24.482–3). It is as if a murderer has appeared suddenly in a

strange country; yet here it is the bereaved, not the killer, and he is bringing himself to supplicate and kiss these hands,

terrible hands, man-killing hands, that had slain many of his sons
(24.479),

each item of that awe-inspiring triad more specific³⁶ and each intensifying the extraordinary quality of what Priam has brought himself to do. By now, this is all (or nearly all³⁷) on the human level, and the reflections that prove so crucial are unprepared by the gods: they indeed depend on the fact that it is Priam who is here, that he can call on Achilles to look on him and see his own father there, that Achilles can reflect on the common mortality that they share (24.525–6):

This is what the gods have woven for poor mortals, to live in pain and sorrow: they have no cares themselves.

This is a quintessential ‘life is like that’ explanation.³⁸ It is not that it is pointless to ask questions about how things have come to this, why Achilles has by now doomed himself to death and his father to bereavement, why the Trojan War happened and why Hector died. It is just that these are no longer the most important questions to ask. Misery is ubiquitous; it is the human lot; it requires no special explanation to fathom why it should have come their way too. The explaining process need go no further. The gods matter, for it is they who have set up this way of the world. But what matters more is the way these mortals cope with that understanding, and the fraught dynamic of their human encounter.

We can again find parallels in plenty among the historians, especially but not only Herodotus.³⁹ There are times when the gods cannot be left out of it: Croesus’ salvation, the salvation of Greece, Sparta’s loss of Thebes (Xen.

³⁶ Cf. Richardson (1993) 322–3 ad loc.

³⁷ Nearly all, because Achilles mentions that Thetis had come from Zeus and that he realises that the gods have guided Priam to the tent (24.560–70), implying without quite saying that this is one of his reasons for releasing the body (560–1). But this comes towards the end of the scene, at a moment when Achilles is at risk of being provoked by Priam’s impatience; its relevance is as much in the danger that, if he kills Priam, he will be offending against Zeus’ instructions (569–70). The emphasis is on the immense human strain involved in controlling his emotions. So also Macleod (1982) 124: ‘Achilles knows his anger could flare up again: that is why he dwells on the divine will, which is to curb himself as much as it is to reassure Priam.’

³⁸ *HQY* ch. 1[f].

³⁹ *HQY* ch. 10. Cf. also Baragwanath, below. Ch. 4: the gods have a role to play in Herodotus’ treatment of Libya, and the final chapter (4.205) could not make that clearer. But there too the narrative focus rests on the human level, and so does the principal contribution to the work as a whole.

Hell. 5.4.1). Yet even in those cases human interactions are what absorb author and reader. Mortal affairs may not be fully comprehensible on their own terms, but it is still those mortal terms which can be understood most surely, and make the stuff of which historical narrative is made.

3. Generalising and Intertextuality

By Book 24 it is a story about more than Achilles' wrath: generalisations like his about divine carelessness and mortal misery point to universal and repeated human experience. In antiquity Homer was often regarded as a source of philosophical insight, and that is not a nonsensical view, any more than it is nonsensical to find generalisable morals in specific historiographic narratives. One of the paradoxes of the *Iliad* is the way that Achilles, the most special of special cases—the fastest of runners, the fiercest of warriors, the one man who has firm knowledge of his fate—, can be found paradigmatic for life-choices that so many ordinary mortals have had to face.⁴⁰ He may *know* that he will win eternal glory if he goes back to the fight, and know that he will die: many humans facing battle may simply hope for a version of the first and fear the reality of the second; but that knowledge of Achilles sharpens the choice, it does not fundamentally change it. In Herodotus too firm contours can give the clarity of extremes—extreme power in the Persian monarch, extreme freedom (at least in one sense of freedom) in Athenian democracy.⁴¹ Thucydides may similarly find clarity about the moral impact of war by exploring intra-city *stasis*, the case where passions are at their most intense (3.80–2), and after portraying Cleon as the demagogue *par excellence* can pass quickly over Athenagoras and Hyperbolus; Xenophon pays particular attention to individuals of extreme ability and character, Cyrus or Agesilaus, and discusses only one narrow oligarchy in depth, the excessively brutal Thirty at Athens;⁴² Polybius finds Rome, which managed things so uniquely well, the ideal test-case for his constitutional musings.

There is however a less grand and all-embracing sense in which the story goes beyond that of Achilles' anger and does not end here. Many hints have looked forward to the two great developments that loom in the near future. One is Achilles' own death, presaged in the narrative with increasing detail. By now we know that his death will be certain 'immediately' after Hector's,⁴³

⁴⁰ Cf. Pelling in Pelling–Wyke (2014) 6–8. Something similar may be said about the Odysseus of the *Odyssey*: Goldhill (1991) 1–5.

⁴¹ *HQY* chs. 9, 12–13.

⁴² Dillery (1995) 138–63; cf. Flower (2017) 305.

⁴³ A phrase that has often been felt to cause problems, given that in the Epic Cycle several episodes intervened between Hector's death and Achilles': cf. Kelly (2012b) 249–52, deciding that Thetis is mistaken or exaggerating; M. L. West (2003b) 7–8, (2011a) 346, and (2013) 149–50. But what Thetis says is that 'immediately after Hector your fate is *ἐτοῖμος*' (18.96), and as Edwards (1991) 158 says ad loc., *ἐτοῖμος* = "ready", "certain to be fulfilled". It is the

that it will be at the hands of Paris and Apollo in combination, and that it will happen by the Scaean gates and close under the wall; we may also have a sense that Hector's threat will come true and the gods will still be angry (18.96, 19.417, 21.277–8, 22.359–60, 23.80–1, 24.131–2).⁴⁴ The other is the fall of Troy 'through Athena's counsel', which will follow 'after' or 'from' Hector's death (ἐκ τοῦ in the words of Zeus himself, 15.69–71); and the delay of the material on the judgement of Paris (24.25–30; above, p. 9) helps us to understand why—that continuing anger of Hera and Poseidon and Athena.⁴⁵ This is conveyed too by ways that go beyond explicit prophecy. We know what Hector's death will mean for Troy (22.60–76), and Priam can well reflect on the horror of an old man's death, white hair, white beard, his genitals rent by dogs (22.74–6). The imminent death that they share gives extra point to those musings of Achilles as he speaks to Priam: community, but community in death. Historians too will find ways of making the future beyond their limits important to their interpretation: the Athenian empire for Herodotus and the confusion after Mantinea for Xenophon (*Hell.* 7.5.27), both of them themes that loom some way before the texts reach their conclusion; the verdict of future generations on Polybius' Rome (36.9) once it too has met its end (38.21–22, cf. 6.9.12–14); the catastrophes of the last generation of the Republic and the new dispensation of Augustus for Dionysius of Halicarnassus.⁴⁶

There is even a sense that the death of Hector *is*, emblematically, the death of Troy.⁴⁷ As mother, father, and people lament,

it was if all beetling Troy, down from its height, were to be consumed by fire. (*Il.* 22.410–11)

In a similar way Herodotus' Salamis or Thucydides' Syracuse may suggest and anticipate the end of their respective wars, or by an interesting variation Polybius' Cannae looks as if it might presage a Carthaginian victory but turns out not to do so. Here again we are dealing with cause and effect, but this time looking forward rather than backwards: it captures why the battles

certainly rather than the death that is immediate; in a broader sense that death may have already been certain for some time, but Hector's killing can still be a trigger for the decisive train of events.

⁴⁴ See esp. Burgess (2009) 43–55, and, briefly, Schadewaldt (1965) 260–1 and Griffin (1980a) 163 and n. 39.

⁴⁵ Thus, persuasively, Davies (1981); Reinhardt (1997; originally 1938) shows that the judgement lurks inexplicitly in the background of several earlier phases of the narrative. Aristarchus athetised at least some of the passage, probably lines 25–30, but recent commentators give good reasons for keeping it: thus Macleod (1982) 88; Richardson (1993) 276–8; and Brügger (2017) 26.

⁴⁶ Pelling (2016).

⁴⁷ As many have suggested: cf. esp. Schoeck (1961) 117; Griffin (1980a) 1.

are decisive, and that is because of what they *cause*, even if (both in Hector's case and in the historians') they do not cause it immediately. That is so even with the Cannae twist, as Polybius explains why the expected consequence did not come about for deeper reasons embedded in Roman society. So not just explicit foreshadowing but also narrative shaping can point to what is to come, partly because the same factors will be at play on the larger canvas of the whole war, partly because this event itself—a great victory or defeat, the death of the crucial defender—will make the difference.

So far, though, the point is a fluffy one: it feels 'as if' all Troy is falling, it is 'as if' Priam knows what is ahead. Symmetrically fluffy points can be (and often have been) made about the early books. The catalogue of ships in Book 2 'feels as if' it belongs at the beginning of the war, perhaps at Aulis (otherwise why ships rather than tents? And why begin with those places so close to Aulis, in Boeotia?). The duel of Menelaus and Paris in Book 3 'feels as if' it belongs at the beginning of the war, and so does the *teichoskopia*, with Helen pointing out to Priam all those Greek heroes as if they had not been here already, in full sight, for a full ten years (3.146–244). Pandarus' wounding of Menelaus (4.85–147; above, p. 7) 'feels as if' it is symbolically re-enacting Trojan war-guilt; that comes soon after the lovemaking of Helen and Paris, which may similarly recall its first equivalent on the island of Craneae (Paris has mentioned that during his rather perfunctory foreplay, 3.445–6). All those 'feels as if' are plausible enough, just as it is plausible to take them as one of the ways in which the action of the four days of the poem is made to capture the whole action of the war.⁴⁸ In the same way this particular story-line, with a quarrel beginning over a woman but swiftly escalating as masculine pride and aggression take over, can be seen as an equivalent of the whole tale of the war (rather as Herodotus' story of Candaules revisits themes from the initial parade of mythical abductions): for Briseis, read Helen; for Achilles and Agamemnon, read Menelaus and Paris.⁴⁹ Much later, Tacitus will do something similar in the first book of the *Annals*, when we all but re-live the catastrophe of Varus six years before (*Ann.* 1.61–2).⁵⁰ In all these cases narrative contours suggest something bigger, a sequence that develops with the same rhythm because similar factors, human or divine, are driving it; but we can also notice and reflect on the differences (for Caecina's army contrives *not* to suffer Varus' fate). This is a technique that works intratextually as well, for we often see later events retracing a familiar pattern but with some crucial differences. Thus Odysseus' return shares some, but only some, features with the *nostoi* of others from Troy, and

⁴⁸ As many have pointed out, notably Kullmann (1960) 365–6 and (2001) 388–90; Griffin (1980a) 1; Andersen (1990); Dowden (1996) 55–8 ('*Iliad*, mirror of the whole war'); Currie (2016) 1–2.

⁴⁹ Rutherford (2012) 17–22 and (2013) 6–9 and 43–53 has judicious comments on this and on several other issues that are relevant to the next few pages.

⁵⁰ Pelling (1990) 49 = (2002) 160.

his experiences at Ithaca replay some of those in Phaeacia;⁵¹ that divine assembly in *Iliad* 24 strikes a more sombre note than that in *Iliad* 1, as even those carefree gods are moved by what they have seen. Such narrative patterning will become a further familiar feature in the historians as well, and one that they exploit with interpretative flair.⁵²

Is the Homeric point a less fluffy one, though, a matter less of ‘feels as if’ and more of intertextuality? Characters within the poem, especially the old and wise Phoenix and Nestor, typically use narratives of past events to cast light on the present,⁵³ thus embedding a principle—what has happened once can happen again⁵⁴—that is of fundamental importance to later historiography; the light the speakers cast may sometimes shine in directions that they may not be sensing or at least saying themselves,⁵⁵ as for instance when Phoenix puts to Achilles the paradigm of Meleager but glosses over the way that Meleager’s refusal of gifts led to his own death.⁵⁶ Does the Homeric narrator too gesture towards past narratives that the audience would know, and use them to add depth and raise questions? Is he ‘logging into a world-wide web’ (as Elton Barker puts it)⁵⁷ of other stories, playing on his audience’s familiarity with the way in which such tales, and even particular tales, have gone? That is not incompatible with an acknowledgement of the importance of oral performance and (in some sense) oral composition, and indeed it chimes well with the widely accepted idea that individual formulae or type-scenes ‘reverberate’ or ‘resonate’ with the entire tradition.⁵⁸ It is indeed arguable that a hearing audience exploits its awareness of typical patterns even more than a reading one, using that alertness to sense where the story is heading and to recognise what is new and distinctive.⁵⁹ If this is so, then

⁵¹ Rutherford (1985).

⁵² *HQY* chs. 1[c], 8–9.

⁵³ On this see esp. Alden (2000).

⁵⁴ Cf. Arist. *Poetics* 1451b16–9 with Alden (2000) 25 and 43, drawing the parallel with Thuc. 1.22.4, and Saïd (2011) 94.

⁵⁵ Andersen (1987) 3–7 offers further examples of this “secondary” function of the paradigm which refers not to the perception of the message by a character in the plot, but to the understanding of the audience’.

⁵⁶ So e.g. Andersen (1987) 5; Swain (1988) 375. This reading assumes that his death was already part of the story that Homer and his audience knew, which is undemonstrable but not at all unlikely. For thorough discussion of the whole Meleager paradigm see Alden (2000) ch. 7, with full references to earlier scholarship.

⁵⁷ Barker (2008) 50.

⁵⁸ Such ideas of ‘traditional referentiality’ were developed by Foley (1999) and elsewhere, and are illuminatingly applied by Kelly (2007); ‘reverberation’ is the word used by Lang (1983) and Slatkin (1991), while Graziosi and Haubold (2005) prefer ‘epic resonance’.

⁵⁹ So, rightly, Kelly (2012a), defending this ‘oralist perspective’ and insisting that it strengthens rather than weakens the case for applying techniques more familiar in the criticism of written texts; cf. Danek (1998) 25–6, 511–2.

stories are already operating ‘in cahoots’,⁶⁰ depending on other stories to bring out their full significance.⁶¹

This leads us to questions of intertextuality and interpretation, another topic that has become central to historiographic scholarship.⁶² There is a rather unproductive scholarly debate whether one can properly use ‘intertextuality’ in a world before fixed texts, when a poem may be interacting with other strands in the oral tradition rather than anything that has yet been textually fixed.⁶³ That issue is partly semantic, at least for the sort of echoes we are talking about here: this need not be a matter of specific verbal similarities (and there is therefore no need to posit anything approaching a fixed text of any stories that are echoed),⁶⁴ but broad points of theme and plot. I keep ‘intertextuality’ because that is the best way to formulate the manner in which the historians’ narrative interacts with earlier stories. In the Homeric case, one useful way of putting it is in terms of ‘mythological intertextuality’, the phrase suggested by Jonathan Burgess, provided that we remember that these myths would normally take (doubtless shifting) narrative form within oral song or songs.⁶⁵

Might, then, Homer’s original audience find the early parts of the poem, if they heard them in anything like their present version, not merely ‘feeling as if’ it was the beginning of the war but recalling other songs that they have

⁶⁰ *HQ* ch. 3[c].

⁶¹ And in that case the same is likely to be true for other early narrative poetry, notably Hesiod and the Homeric hymns: so Currie (2016), arguing also that such allusiveness may extend to Near Eastern poetic traditions. These are interesting questions, but not ones for this chapter.

⁶² E.g. Damon (2010); Levene (2010) 84–6; and the papers from APA panels in 2011 and 2013 at http://research.ncl.ac.uk/histos/Histos_WorkingPapers.html. I had my say at the 2011 panel (= Pelling (2013)), and will have a further say in a forthcoming paper on Plutarch (Pelling, *forthcoming*).

⁶³ For the debate cf. the various papers in Montanari–Rengakos–Tsagalis (2012), together with the thoughtful reflections of Burgess (2006) and (2009) 56–71. The opposite points of view are clearly put by Kelly (2012b) and Currie (2006), (2011), (2012), and esp. (2016). Currie finds more specific instances of intertextuality than I would, but I do follow him, along with the more cautious Burgess (2006), in his defence of the term (though he now prefers ‘allusion’: Currie (2016) 34).

⁶⁴ Cf. Alden (2000) 9–10; M. L. West (2013) 17. Even Currie, who is prepared to find more specific echoes, points out that ‘something well short of total fixity (exact verbatim reproduction) should suffice’ (Currie (2012) 568, and cf. his full discussion at (2016) 12–22). But Dowden (1996) is prepared to think in terms of fixed texts.

⁶⁵ Burgess (2006), esp. 173, in a very thoughtful discussion. That formulation falls short of encouraging the verbal intertextuality that some scholars would claim (cf. Currie (2011) 207 n. 117 for a clear statement of the differences between the positions, and Burgess (2011) for the case—*contra* e.g. Usener (1990) 208—for finding verbal allusiveness even without fixed texts), but we are here concerned with matters of plot.

heard, on Homer's own lips or on others:⁶⁶ songs that relayed a catalogue of ships at the point where they were about to set sail, songs that had Helen give Priam information on newly-arrived heroes rather than those whom he had seen as they steadily aged? Of course such songs would not be identical with the ones in the *Iliad*, and the versions we have fit their present contexts;⁶⁷ but they could have been closely similar. Such questions have often been put by 'Neoanalysts'⁶⁸ in terms of sources: is the poet of the *Iliad* drawing on those other stories to construct his own? For our purposes, it is more fruitful to follow a more recent phase of Neoanalyst scholarship and put them in terms of reader or hearer response, how an audience might find its understanding of events deepened by such associations.⁶⁹

Once again, we can find counterpart questions to ask about the last third of the poem. The account of Patroclus' *aristeia* in Book 16 shows parallels with what we can reconstruct of Achilles' death-scene, as told in another poem of the epic cycle, the *Aethiopis*:⁷⁰ Achilles too will be struck down by a lesser man, in his case Paris and in Patroclus' Euphorbus, with the help of Apollo (cf. 16.849). Achilles' own raging into battle after Patroclus' death may also foreshadow something of that narrative-sequence.⁷¹ Achilles knows his own death is imminent: Patroclus' ashes are to be marked by a small temporary tomb, until his can be added and they can be buried together (23.243–8; cf. 91–2, 126). Now at the funeral he gives away as prizes not

⁶⁶ So, despite their different views of the poem's genesis, Burgess (2009) 65–6 and M. L. West (2011a) 32–6, then esp. 111–3 (catalogue of ships), 127–8 (duel at start of war), 131 (*teichoskopia*), 344 (Thetis' mourning), 399–400 (games).

⁶⁷ Thus Menelaus acknowledges 'the many sufferings' that the Achaeans have already undergone (3.99) and that Achaeans and Trojans alike would be delighted to see at an end (111–2). The *teichoskopia* similarly assumes that there has been fighting for 'a long time' (3.157, cf. 132–3).

⁶⁸ 'Neoanalysts': so-called as they draw on the traditions of 'Analyst' Homeric scholarship in accepting various strands of earlier poetry that have gone into the making of the poems, but the 'Neo-' reflects a new readiness to see this in terms of a poet drawing on those traditions to make a distinctive creation. As is often remarked, this strand of scholarship therefore typically belongs with the 'Unitarian' approach to which traditional 'Analysis' was opposed.

⁶⁹ Burgess (2006) 167–71 is here particularly insightful.

⁷⁰ The parallels are conveniently tabulated by Currie (2016) 57. For the fragments see M. L. West (2003a) 108–17 and (2013) 129–62; the summary given by Proclus, supplemented by Apollodorus, is particularly illuminating (M. L. West (2003a) 110–2; id. (2013) 129–30). See also Burgess (2009), esp. 72–92, M. L. West (2003b), and Currie (2011) 192–3, 196–7, with reference to earlier literature. Allan (2005) insists on the need to explain Patroclus' death in terms of its role within the *Iliad* itself, but allows that 'If we imagine that Homer knew of, and may indeed have sung himself, stories which were later promulgated under the title *Aethiopis*, there is no difficulty in the idea that he may be encouraging the audience to think of those future events' (13).

⁷¹ For discussion cf. Willcock (1983); Currie (2016) 126–30; M. L. West (2003b); Burgess (1997) and (2009).

merely the dead man's possessions (23.740–7, 799–800), but also his own (23.560–5, 807–8, 827–9). It is as if he is dead already and he is conducting his own funeral as well as his friend's, just as Thetis' mourning for Patroclus merges into mourning for Achilles himself (18.50–64; cf. 24.84–5).⁷² Achilles' funeral was itself to become famous, and in the final scenes of the *Odyssey* the dead Agamemnon refers to it at some length (24.34–94):⁷³ so the same question arises. Might the audience's awareness of the full implications be enhanced by their memories of another song, this time one covering Achilles' own funeral itself, just as their awareness of where Patroclus' or Achilles' earlier *aristeiai* are leading may draw on the memories of how Achilles himself will die? Is the narrative shape itself again insinuating a pattern of cause and effect as we begin the sequence that will lead to that death?

They are reasonable questions, and the answer is somewhere in the range between 'Very likely' and 'Almost certainly'. It is, after all, clear that the audience of the poems was familiar with the broader story of the war: that is made clear by the allusive way in which earlier and later events at Troy are mentioned, not least those 'ships which started the troubles' of 5.63 (above, p. 3), in contrast to the fuller and more expository style found appropriate for recounting pre-war events.⁷⁴ The complication is that much of our knowledge of these earlier and later developments is based on our fragments of the epic cycle, and it is generally⁷⁵ thought that those other poems were composed, or at least reached their final form, later than the *Iliad* itself. They may therefore be drawing on the *Iliad* either as a source or for their own allusive purposes, just as the poet of *Odyssey* 24 may well be including echoes of Patroclus' games when describing the funeral of Achilles: that would not be the only way in which the final scenes of the poem can be seen as giving closural echoes not just of the *Odyssey* but of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined.⁷⁶ So

⁷² That need not imply that the lament itself recalls a specific lament for Achilles in an earlier poem: see the discussion of Currie (2016) 119–26. I here agree with Kelly (2012b) that 'there is no reason to believe that her first speech of lamentation is poorly motivated or ill-suited to the situation of the *Iliad*, or that it would be better suited to another poem or story' (240).

⁷³ It is also mentioned in Proclus' summary of the *Aethiopsis*: M. L. West (2003a) 112–3. Cf. Burgess (2009) 90–1. The Neoanalyst inference was that the *Iliad* version was based on a *Memnonis* (or *Achilleis*): Kakridis (1949) 83–9; Kullmann (1960) 331–5; Schadewaldt (1965) 170.

⁷⁴ Austin (1966).

⁷⁵ But not universally: Dowden (1996) 48–9 entertains the possibility that at least the *Aethiopsis* may be pre-Homeric, while Ballabriga (1998) 22–32 finds traces in our texts, owed to activities of the Homeridae around the year 600, of written versions of (*inter alia*) the *Telegony*'s treatment of Odysseus' later adventures. The more usual view is that the *Telegony* considerably post-dates the *Odyssey*: thus M. L. West (2011b) 232, 237 and (2013) 288–92.

⁷⁶ On such echoes of the *Iliad* in *Od.* 24 cf. Rutherford (1991–3) 45 = (2001) 130 and the notes of Heubeck (1992) on 24.39–40, 50–7, 76–9, 85–92, 95, 178–85, 315–7, 376–82, 472–88, 539–44; Danek (1998) 468–71, 474–5, 495, 498–9. Danek is more cautious than Heubeck, and in some of these passages Danek is probably right in finding echoes of versions in other

there is always a chance that some at least of the similarities are telling a tale not about the technique of the *Iliad*, but about that of (say) the *Aethiopsis*.⁷⁷ That certainly does not end the discussion; there is no reason why such a poet should not be drawing both on the *Iliad* and on other strands of the tradition, known both to the *Iliad*-poet and to himself. In the case of the *Aethiopsis* one frequent move is to posit a lost *Memnonis* on which both *Aethiopsis* and *Iliad* draw,⁷⁸ but there are other possibilities too.⁷⁹

So some caution has to remain,⁸⁰ but it is caution that anyway applies only to the first-generation audience of the poem, those fortunate few who heard a version of the poem on the poet's own lips or on those of his early followers. If we jump forward again to the historians, they were writing for audiences who certainly knew the epic cycle as well as the *Iliad*. Many will indeed have taken those other poems to be Homeric (the question is raised by Herodotus in connection with the *Cypria*, 2.117: he argues against authenticity, but the case needed to be made).⁸¹ However many of these intertextual implications Homer's original audience may have sensed, they were available to later generations to draw. If we find similar techniques in the historians themselves, the model of Homeric patterning can well be in their and their audiences' minds.

What the historians *do* with such intertextuality is another question, but many would now accept that the answers are interesting ones.⁸²

poems, perhaps especially a *Memnonis*; but (as Heubeck on 85–92 remarks) that need not preclude an 'indirect reference' as well to Iliadic passages that themselves echo that (?) *Memnonis*. This would be what students of literary intertextuality call a 'window-reference'.

⁷⁷ Thus M. L. West (2003b) argues that the role of Antilochus in particular is a post-Iliadic development, constructed especially for a *Memnonis* composed 'not too long after the *Iliad*, perhaps around 630 or 620; the *Iliad* poet might well still have been alive' (12); cf. M. L. West (2013) 129–36 and on Antilochus, 143–4. For doubts whether one can be so certain about the chronology see Currie (2016) 60 n. 130.

⁷⁸ Thus, classically, Schadewaldt (1965) 172–6, reconstructing a poem of twenty scenes and about 2000 verses in four books.

⁷⁹ E.g., M. L. West (2013) 132–3, 135–6 posits a third poem, an *Amazonis*, which was combined with a *Memnonis* to constitute the *Aethiopsis*: not accepted by Davies (2016) 2 n. 2. See the full discussions of Currie (2006) 23–41 and (2016) 55–72, with references to earlier scholarship.

⁸⁰ Burgess (2001) 149–57 concludes that 'when similarity is seen between a Cyclic passage and a Homeric passage, it is most likely that the Homeric passage is borrowing from or alluding to traditional material that led to the Epic Cycle' (155; cf. id. (2006) 150). 'Most likely' is right; not 'certain'.

⁸¹ Notice also Herodotus' suspicion about Homer's authorship of the *Epigoni*, 4.32. See the discussion of Graziosi (2002) 193–5, and more broadly 164–200, on the process whereby, and the reasons why, the text of 'Homer' was narrowed down to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

⁸² For Herodotus see Pelling (2006) and *HQJ*, index s.v. 'intertextuality'; for one particular test-case in Thucydides see Rood (1999). See also works cited above, n. 62

4. The *Odyssey*

The *Iliad* is richer than the *Odyssey* for the purposes of this inquiry. One wonders why that should be. Perhaps it is because historians are so often concerned with war and suffering;⁸³ ‘bad reality, good copy’, as the journalistic cliché goes. Or perhaps it is because those themes so often produce the glorious deeds that historiography commemorates and so often generate bewildering shifts of fortune that invite, even if they sometimes frustrate, the attempt to explain. Still, the *Odyssey* had a great effect on historiography as well, especially when the historians turned from the ways of war to those of peace.⁸⁴ In that poem too we find ‘intertextuality’, if that is the right word, most identifiably intertextuality with the *Iliad*.⁸⁵ That background presence draws attention to the different qualities that are now required of an Odysseus. This is a world of peace, and one in which women play a much bigger role; sword-swinging heroics are rarely the total answer when danger looms, and when they do become necessary it is essential to judge the right time and manner; but more often deceit, restraint, caution, and charm are what are required, the art of winning hearts rather than stabbing them through. Caution and prudence were valued in the *Iliad* too,⁸⁶ as were Odysseus’ diplomatic skills (that is why he was chosen for the embassy in *Iliad* 9); but those qualities have now come to dominate, and Odysseus’ diplomacy is also different, now much more a matter of trickery and deceit.⁸⁷ And that at bottom is also a causal point: this sort of character

⁸³ Macleod (1983) 7–8 = (2001) 301–2 on ‘human passion, death, and degradation, with behind it all the will of an all-powerful god’ as the subject of epic; 157–8, on the links between epic and historiography. Cf. also Raaflaub (2011) 17–18 on the centrality of war to historiography and to Herodotus in particular.

⁸⁴ Marincola (2007), and cf. Barker (2009) ch. 3 (‘Herodotus’ Odyssean enquiry’).

⁸⁵ As is analysed exhaustively by Usener (1990), elaborately and with theoretical sophistication by Pucci (1987), and incisively by Rutherford (1991–3) and (2013) 76–80. Cf. Currie (2006) 7–15 and (2016) 39–47, and Danek (1998), Index s.v. ‘Ilias, interpretierte Stellen’ and 509–11. The possibility of a relation to a pre-Homeric *Argonautica* has also been thoroughly mooted (Danek (1998) esp. 197–201, 213, 250–7, and M. L. West (2005) with earlier bibliography), and so has the question whether the *Odyssey* exploits allusions to alternative versions of Odysseus’ own story, especially one in which Penelope herself played a part in the plot against the suitors (Danek (1998); Currie (2016) 47–55). This final possibility has some relevance to questions of ‘virtual history’ aired in Pelling (2013) and in *HQ* ch. 3.

⁸⁶ Schofield (1986).

⁸⁷ Odysseus’ reputation for deceit is there in the *Iliad* too: the Trojan Socus can address him as ‘much-famed Odysseus, insatiate of trickery and toil’ (δόλων ἄτ’ ἠδὲ πόνουιο, 11.430), and this is presumably also what underlies Achilles’ suspicious opening at 9.308–14. For other hints, cf. Rutherford (1986) 149 = (2009) 163; Pucci (1987) 144–7 (‘the shadow of trickery’, 144) and, in his 1995 ‘Afterword’, 225. But clear cases of deceptiveness on his part are seen only in the Doloneia (*Il.* 10.383).

is what is needed to bring success and even survival in awkward situations,⁸⁸ the archetype for the ‘cunning intelligence’ or ‘shrewdness’ (*μητις*) that later generations of Greeks so prized—and that Herodotus’ Themistocles will show in plenty.⁸⁹

There is plenty of blame in the *Odyssey* too, especially blame of human characters,⁹⁰ and it is more fundamentally integrated into the plot than in the *Iliad*. The ‘it’s their fault, they started it’ line of reasoning is heard louder: it is pressed home in the first words of Zeus, words that have often been sensed to have a programmatic ring (*Od.* 1.32–43).⁹¹

Oh, how mortals blame the gods! They say that their woes come from us, but in fact these are their own fault, and they suffer more than their due share because of their arrogant outrages (*σφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίησιν*). Take Aegisthus now. He went beyond what was due in marrying the wedded wife of Agamemnon and killing the man himself on his return; yet he knew he faced sheer destruction for it, because we sent Hermes, the keen-eyed slayer of Argos, to tell him not to kill Agamemnon nor to marry his wife: ‘for vengeance will come from Orestes, of Atreus’ line, when he grows up and longs to reclaim his land’. That is what Hermes said, but he did not persuade Aegisthus with his friendly good advice; and now Aegisthus has paid back everything in full.

As on several other occasions in the first half of the poem, it is not difficult to sense that the programme applies to those other aspiring husbands, the suitors besetting Penelope. Aegisthus is even described here with some of the vocabulary that will be familiar with the suitors, especially *ἀτασθαλίησιν*; and everyone blames him, just as most people are blaming the suitors. It is because that parallel is so clear that Orestes can be used as an inspiring model for the young Telemachus (1.298–300, cf. 3.306–8, 4.546). We can still say that, as in the *Iliad*, the greater interest rests in the human characteristics—Odysseus’, Penelope’s, Telemachus’, the suitors’—that are going to ensure that this outcome is reached. But the feeling that it is the *right* outcome remains more basic to the *Odyssey* than anything in the *Iliad*, and one fundamental explanation for the suitors’ death is that they deserve it.⁹²

⁸⁸ Cf. Griffin (1980b) 49–50, ‘Odysseus is a new sort of hero, the survivor. Disguise, deception, endurance—these are the qualities he needs to survive.’ Thus also Rutherford (1991–3) 41–2 = (2001) 123–4.

⁸⁹ Cf. esp. Detienne–Vernant (1978); and on Themistocles, Blösel (2001) 185–6, (2004) 158–60 and 360; and *HQF* ch. 14(d).

⁹⁰ Thus Nagy (1979) ch. 12 (‘Poetry of praise, poetry of blame’), giving helpful comparison with Pindar, has much more on the *Odyssey* than the *Iliad*.

⁹¹ E.g., by Dodds (1951) 32; Lloyd-Jones (1971) 29; Fenik (1974) 209–10; Kullmann (1985) 6.

⁹² S. R. West (1988) 55–60; Danek (1998) 41–2. It is true that some deserve it more than others, and Allan (2006) 23–5 reasonably stresses that the careful narrative discrimination of

The gods themselves are seen to be steering matters in that direction, and the cry of joy of Odysseus' father Laertes does not seem deluded (24.351–2):

So, father Zeus, you do still exist after all, you gods on great Olympus, if the suitors have genuinely paid for their outrageous [ἀτάσθαλον] violence.

So when Antinous claims that it is not the suitors who are to blame but Penelope (2.85–128), we are not likely to believe him, even if in a way we see his point. Matters are different, though, with the bard Phemius, so again blameworthiness matters: his plea is accepted that he acted unwillingly and under duress (22.350–3), Telemachus confirms that he is ἀναίτιος (22.356), and he and the herald Medon are spared. Such discriminations of different degrees of guilt are important to Herodotus too,⁹³ and he also conveys some notion of divine guidance to a conclusion that is—certainly from the Greek perspective, and probably in a broader moral sense—the right one:⁹⁴ the second point is even more explicit in Xenophon (*Hell.* 4.4.12, 5.4.1).

Nor is Aegisthus' case the only crime-and-punishment element introduced at the outset. The proem has also explained that Odysseus was unable to bring his comrades to the safety of home, for they too 'died through their own arrogant outrages'—ἀτασθαλίησιν again—when they ate the cattle of the Sun (1.7–9, cf. 12.300), and the Sun took his revenge. The *Iliad*, as we saw, looked for a divine explanation—'Which of the gods was it ...?'—and then complicated that by bringing out how deeply the human origins of the quarrel were rooted. The movement of the *Odyssey* initially goes in the other direction: there is that initial encouragement to look for human blameworthiness, but we are also swiftly told that Odysseus' suffering is because of Poseidon's unrelenting hostility (1.20–1). That too—to give further complication—goes back to a human's own actions, for Odysseus had killed Poseidon's son Polyphemus (1.68–75): not exactly *crime-and-punishment*, perhaps, given what we will discover of the circumstances in Book 9, but still a case of the important actions starting with the humans, and blame—here Poseidon's blame—playing an important explanatory role. And, as far as the fate of Odysseus' men is concerned, that statement of the prologue is backed up by the narrative of the events themselves (12.324–65): ἀτασθαλίαι may there emerge as a harsh word to have used, but the pattern of blame—divine blame, here that of the Sun—and punishment certainly recurs.⁹⁵ And if

the two 'good' suitors, Amphinomus and Leiodes, does not spare either of them from vengeance.

⁹³ E.g. 4.200.1, 6.50.1, 7.156.2; *HQJ* chs. 1, 6[b].

⁹⁴ *HQJ* chs. 10–11.

⁹⁵ Fenik (1974) 213–5, drawing the parallel with Poseidon's wrath over the Cyclops: 'both incidents show an angry god avenging a personal affront committed under circumstances that strongly encouraged or even forced the deed'.

Odysseus does escape when everyone else does not, a lot of the explanation rests in the support of Athena: so that takes us back, once again, to the gods.

So there is a to-and-fro between divine and human levels as in the *Iliad*, and both need to be brought in if we are to understand what is going on; disentangling exactly how, and how far, they interact in each case may be more difficult. There is certainly no denial that sufferings come to humans from the gods *as well*, so we are not that distant from Achilles' sombre reflections of *Iliad* 24 (above, p. 13): Zeus' point in that initial tirade is only that it is humans' own fault that they suffer 'more than their due share'.⁹⁶ If there is more of an emphasis on divine concern for human morality,⁹⁷ that may be a matter of plot requirements: the story *does* end with crime punished.

All those points help to add up to an explanation of why things end up the way they do, happily for Odysseus. There is also the question of why and how they have gone wrong, particularly in Ithaca. The simple answer is one of absence: Odysseus was not there, leaving space for all those bad people to flourish. But the implications are pointed in more specific ways, and as usual it is done through the narrative rather than made clodhoppingly explicit. In particular, there has been no assembly since Odysseus left (2.26–7): no *agorē*, that mark of civilised life⁹⁸ (it is a mark of the Cyclopes' lack of civilised community that they have no *agorē* and no system of justice, 9.112). There is an implication now that one of the ways in which Odysseus was 'gentle like a father' was to listen to what others had to say, rather as he held *agorai* of his companions during his travels (9.171, 10.188, 12.319) and rather as 'Zeus the father' is prepared in both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to listen to what the other gods want to put to him. The next time we have a meeting in the Ithacan *agorē*, it is a travesty of a proper assembly (16.361), as only the suitors are present, and they acknowledge that the people are against them and are fearful that Telemachus might summon one again (16.375–7). It may then be a sign of returning normality that an impromptu *agorē* is held immediately after their families have buried the suitors (24.420–66), even though it ends in the 'wrong' decision—in this case, to move quickly for vengeance.⁹⁹ Assemblies can always go astray, as memories of the assemblies in *Iliad* 1 and 2 (surely in the background of *Odyssey* 2)¹⁰⁰ may already suggest, as Herodotus will point out devastatingly at 5.97.2, and as Thucydides and Xenophon will several times imply—but still, any consultation is better than no consultation. Here in Ithaca, there may be some force in Mentor's point that he blames the

⁹⁶ Lesky (2001) 190; Rutherford (1985) 145 and 149 n. 54; Allan (2006) 17 and n. 75.

⁹⁷ This should not be overstated: there is some concern for morality in the *Iliad* too. Cf. Lloyd-Jones (1971) ch. 1; Kullmann (1985) 9–10; Allan (2006), with many further references.

⁹⁸ Vernant (1982) 125–6. On the *agorē* in Homer see Barker (2009) 31–134, emphasising the varied and shifting form that assemblies take.

⁹⁹ It is analysed by Barker (2009) 108–13.

¹⁰⁰ S. R. West (1988) 128; Rutherford (1991–3) 44 = (2001) 128; Griffin (1980a) 12; Barker (2009) 93, 101–2.

dēmos for allowing the suitors to get away with it (2.239–41; cf. Halitherses at 24.454–62), just as there was force in Achilles' similar feeling of outrage at the way that the Achaean army did not restrain Agamemnon (*Il.* 1.231–2), a passage that is probably recalled here. But there was even less procedure for the Ithacan *dēmos* to do anything about it than there was for the army at Troy. The suitors can claim that they fear nobody (Eurymachus at 2.199–200); we can see why. So, as in the *Iliad* and as in the historians, emphasis on individuals and attention to a deficient societal structure both play their explanatory part; so, in particular, does an interest in how *logos* works, and how and when it does not.

5. The Literature of Suffering

'This is what the gods have woven for poor mortals, to live in pain and sorrow': those reflections of Achilles (*Il.* 24.525–6; above, p. 13) might seem unsuitably bleak for the lighter world of the *Odyssey*, but they are echoed here as well. The solemn lecture given by young Nausicaa to Odysseus (6.188–90)—Zeus gives good things and bad things to mortals as he wishes, and you just have to put up with it—is delightfully characterising of her. She is trying to be so very mature.

Not of course that she is wrong;¹⁰¹ and this is one of several echoes in Phaeacia of the end of the *Iliad*, underlining both how distant that world of real suffering seems in this near-fairyland and how present those memories still are for Odysseus himself.¹⁰² Odysseus has heard Demodocus' song about the Wooden Horse, and he weeps (8.523–31):

Just as a woman weeps, falling on her dead husband after he has fallen himself in front of his city and his people, trying to ward off the pitiless day from his town and the children; she has seen him as he dies, gasping out his last breath, and clings to him as she lets out her shrill lament; the men behind strike her back and shoulders with their spears as they lead her into slavery, to have toil and misery, and her cheeks are wasted with the most piteous of grief: so piteously did Odysseus weep...

'Not precisely Andromache (for the woman in the simile reaches her husband's body before he draws his last breath), the wife in the simile stands for all the widowed women of Troy, all those who suffered in the sack, and suffered at Odysseus' hands. Now the victor and the victim are united in suffering and grief. ... This is the lesson of shared and common suffering,

¹⁰¹ Any more than Eumaeus is wrong in the similar passage at 14.444–5; but the thoughts come over differently in the mouth of the older man.

¹⁰² Rutherford (1991–3) 48–9 = (2001) 135–7.

common not just to friends and allies, but to all mankind.¹⁰³ Early in the *Iliad* Greeks and Trojans seemed very different (3.1–9; above, p. 9); the poem ends with an emphasis on what they share. One can again find something similar in Herodotus' portrayal of Greeks and barbarians: west and east may eventually be not so very different after all.¹⁰⁴

That weeping of Odysseus both disturbs and intrigues Alcinous. For the second time in the day, he is concerned that his unknown guest has found Demodocus' themes distressing, and he stops the bard and tactfully moves things on (8.542–3, cf. 8.93–103). He moves to console Odysseus as well, and he too finds it natural to bring in the gods (8.577–80):

Tell us why you weep and lament so deep in your heart when you hear of the fates of Argives, Danaans, and Troy. The gods brought about that fate, weaving destruction for mortals, to give future generations too a topic for song.

Alcinous clearly wishes to be consoling. Part of the point is presumably in 'to give future generations *too* a topic for song'—future generations too, as well as us; Demodocus is only doing what bards have to do, and he should not be blamed. It is an equivalent of Telemachus' defence of the Ithacan bard Phemius when Penelope finds his song of the 'painful return of the Achaeans' so objectionable (1.326–7, 346–52), and he also brings in Zeus (not without a touch of the same false sophistication as we see in Nausicaa): 'it is not the bards who are *αἴτιοι*, it is Zeus, who doles out as he wishes to bread-eating mortals'.¹⁰⁵ It is interesting that both Telemachus and Alcinous feel it appropriate to say that it is all owed to the gods; the expected reaction here is evidently not 'but that only makes it worse, if all this suffering was just to produce a good story', but rather a genuinely comforting 'so in a way it does all make some sense'. This is just the way of mortal existence—a 'life is like that' insight, closing out the need to seek any further explanation—and Achilles knew that we must bear our suffering as best we can. There is some consolation in simply being able to locate, to understand, however painful that understanding may be. With or without the gods and whether or not one can do anything about it, some of the historians' insights into the

¹⁰³ Rutherford (1986) 155–6 = (2009) 173–5; cf. Pucci (1987) 221–3. Usener (1990) 201 remarks that an allusion to the *Iliad* 'is not to be ruled out *a priori*': rather an understatement. There is also a sense in which it continues the implications of Demodocus' song, showing what the Wooden Horse led to and meant for the Trojans (Nagy (1979) 101; Goldhill (1991) 53–4; Danek (1998) 159): cause and effect, once again. As Simon Hornblower reminds me, Odysseus himself did not stop causing such suffering once the war was over: 100 lines later he will calmly relate how shortly after leaving Troy he sacked the city of the Cicones, killing the men and taking the women and property (9.39–42).

¹⁰⁴ Pelling (1997) and *HQT*, esp. chs. 4(e), 5(c), and, with comparison of Thucydides, 14(e).

¹⁰⁵ The passage is echoed in a very different register when Telemachus accepts that the bard is *ἀναίτιος* for the outrages in the house, 22.356 (above, p. 24).

fundamentals of human behaviour may be equally illuminating and equally stark.

There may be more still to this whole fascinating scene, and may tell on the very nature of the literature of suffering, historiography included. Alcinous stops Demodocus from singing because he is causing Odysseus such grief; that is not the way a convivial evening should develop. Doubtless this is correct behaviour for a solicitous host, but still Odysseus had been the one to request this very song (8.487–98).¹⁰⁶ Perhaps Odysseus had misjudged it: searching for confirmation that his fame has reached so far, he may then have been taken aback by his own response. If so, this may be an early equivalent of what the Athenians found when Phrynichus put on his *Capture of Miletus* (Hdt. 6.21.2). Tales of suffering need to come close to home if they are to be moving, but not as close as this. Yet surely the experienced Odysseus should have been able to foretell how he would react, once that less charged story had generated similar tears only a few hours before (8.73–86). One of the conversations of Plutarch's *Table Talk* (5.1) discusses 'why it gives us pleasure to hear actors pretending to be angry or in pain, when we are distressed when people are genuinely feeling that way', a version of the familiar 'Why does tragedy give pleasure?' It is indeed a paradox that we can gain such aesthetic pleasure in reading and hearing of things that we know will move and sadden us, and actively seek out such an experience; and the more so, when those stories touch the nerve of what one has lived through oneself.¹⁰⁷

Let the two of us, here in the hut, drinking and eating, take pleasure in each other's painful troubles as we recall them; for a man takes pleasure in pains too, the sort of man who suffers much and wanders much. (Eumaeus at 15.398–401)

That paradox in its turn is not irrelevant to historiography, so rarely concerned with happiness and tranquillity, so frequently with terror, brutality, and death, and sometimes (especially explicitly in Polybius) written for those who have had, or might face, similar experiences themselves. One explanation that historiography will offer is in terms of usefulness, the capacity of such narratives to teach lessons, maybe practical ones of how to act, maybe just intellectual ones of how to grasp what is going on in one's own life. Such insights may hurt, but they help. But that is only part of the truth, and historians, Herodotus in particular, know that there is pleasure too in the way that stories guide us through the richness of human experience, bad as well as good.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Goldhill (1991) 54: the juxtaposition of Demodocus' song and the simile of the widow raise the question why Odysseus should have made this request, but preclude a certain answer.

¹⁰⁷ Macleod (1982) 7–8 and (1983) 7–8 = (2001) 301–3.

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Momigliano knew that ‘if I am going to speak about causes of war in ancient historiography I cannot pass over all the nefarious consequences of that great epic model—the *Iliad*’.¹⁰⁸ He also thought that ‘Herodotus quietly rebelled against Homer—a rebellion, incidentally, that has made history possible as we understand it’.¹⁰⁹ But not all of the consequences were nefarious; not all was rebellion; and Homer himself went a very long way to making that history possible.

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¹⁰⁸ Momigliano (1966) 114 = (1960) 15.

¹⁰⁹ Momigliano (1966) 115 = (1960) 16.

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