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Françoise Létoublon  
**War as a spectacle**

“Gaze, vision and visuality”: the subject of this volume indicates a major interest in visual perception in Greek literature. As none of these terms corresponds to a Greek proper word, at least in the archaic period I am concerned with, it seems difficult to approach this very wide field. For a general overview, I will therefore use the notions developed by Alex Purves in her recent book, *Space and Time in Greek Literature* (Cambridge, 2010), and in Michael Squire’s introduction of the recent volume *Sight and the Ancient Senses* (Abingdon, 2016). Since neither book deals with Greek language concerning sight, I will rely on some lexical remarks, starting with the lexical entries regarding Homer’s attempt to understand what “to see” means for the Archaic period. I will thereafter follow the gazes of the characters and the narrator in the *Iliad*, intending to show how the dramatic tension increases until the meeting between Priam and Achilles in Book 24, where I analyse the reciprocity of the gaze through the ambiguity of a famous simile. The dramatic tension of the passage owes much to this mirror effect,<sup>1</sup> and shows that Homeric language concerning gaze does not reflect a merely physical process, but also induces a high level of emotion.

The central role that sight plays in Homer is well proven by the number of links between seeing and living; as several Homeric formulas indicate, to see means to live, and conversely to lose sight means to die.<sup>2</sup> Taking Aristotelian terminology as her point of departure, Purves (2010, 1–64) shows that Homer, the “perfect surveyor”,<sup>3</sup> aims for an “Eusynoptic *Iliad*”. In my own course, following the *Iliad* from Achilles’ anger to Hector’s *lusis*, I will try to adopt a “bird’s-eye view”, borrowing the expression from de Jong and Nünlist 2004b,

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1 See Squire’s introduction for the insistence on both the reciprocity of the gaze and the mirror effect, with the splendid epigram he quotes as an epigraph, where the mirror is speaking in the first person.

2 Létoublon 2010, Michel in this volume. See, for instance, *Il.* 5.10 (οὐδέ μὲ φησι | δηρὸν ἔτ’ ὄψεσθαι λαμπρὸν φάος ἡελίοιο), 18.61 = 442 (ὄφρα δέ μοι ζῶει καὶ ὄρᾳ φάος ἡελίοιο), 24.558 (αὐτόν τε ζῶειν καὶ ὄρᾳ φάος ἡελίοιο). See also the formulas with *δερκ-* below in n. 16.

3 The expression comes from George Puttenham’s *The Arte of English Poesie*, quoted as an epigraph (Purves 2010, 1).

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**Note:** It is a pleasant duty to thank the organisers and participants of the Freiburg Gaze Conference for all their remarks, and particularly Deborah Steiner for her help in the discussion. I am also deeply grateful to Stephen Rojcewicz for more than simply correcting my English, and to the anonymous reviewers whose remarks were very useful for revising and enhancing my text.

meaning I will focus on certain episodes and “fly over” the rest.<sup>4</sup> I share Purves’ nuanced position: “throughout the *Iliad*, human vision is complicated by the fantasy of what or how these immortals see. There is a tendency [...] for the audience of the poem to take their own visual cues from these divine superwitnesses. Homeric scholarship has also emphasised, however, that the *Iliad* is difficult to visualise as a single, coherent entity. Not only do we run into problems connected with sequence and simultaneity when attempting to “see” the plot as if it were a picture, but we are also given very few examples of clear-sighted human vision within the poem. Despite scholars’ observations about the occasional panoramic standpoint of the Homeric narrator, we are rarely afforded a sustained bird’s-eye view. [...] We are faced with the paradox of Aristotle’s interpretation of a poem that adheres in form to the principles of what is *eusynoptic*, and that, even in the surface area of its plot, fills an area that could be of approximately the right size to be seen in one view, if one could attain the right vantage point. Yet within the poem itself, the account of the war takes place only frame by frame, moving from one point of view to the next.”<sup>5</sup>

## Homeric language of sight and semantic features

There are actually very few nouns signifying “gaze” in Homer. I may cite in the *Iliad* two appearances of the accusative ὄψιν, one of the dative ὄψει; the first may mean “sight” as one of the senses, the others rather mean “appearance”.<sup>6</sup> Therefore we may suppose that there was at this time no abstract notion of “sight”, at least linguistically speaking.<sup>7</sup> The verbal forms are numerous; ὀράω, εἶδον, ὄψομαι and ὄπωπα already form the same heteroclitic paradigm, as the phrases with the instrumental dative of the name of sight

4 For instance, though aware of its importance in the question of text and image, I will deliberately leave aside the famous description of Achilles’ shield in Book 18; in my view, this description occurs in an intense dramatic context (Létoublon 1999a), but is not part of my vision of “war as a spectacle”.

5 Purves 2010, 34–35.

6 *Il.* 6.468 (... πατρὸς φίλου ὄψιν ἀτυχθεὶς), 24.632 (εἰσφορῶν ὄψιν τ’ ἀγαθὴν καὶ μῦθον ἀκούων), 20.205 (ὄψει δ’ οὐτ’ ἄρ πω σὺ ἐμοῦς ἴδες οὐτ’ ἄρ’ ἐγὼ σοῦς).

7 I do not share Bruno Snell’s (1975) opinion that if there is no word in Homer meaning, for instance, “mind”, there was no contemporary notion of mind and person. I think that several features, like the deliberative monologues, clearly show that Homeric characters do have a sense of self-consciousness, as the use of μεμνηρίζειν proves.

organ, ὀφθαλμός, show.<sup>8</sup> Homeric Greek also knows a more archaic term, formed on \*ok<sup>w</sup>– like the future and perfect already mentioned, and most often used in the dual form ὄσσε, but ὀφθαλμός appears to be the living form in the language of Homer, as shown by its use when the eyes encounter an injury in course of fighting.<sup>9</sup> As shown by other cases, verbs that describe common or basic ideas tend to form their tenses using several lexical roots, which are linked to fine semantic nuances.<sup>10</sup> By leaning on Indo-European etymology and the meanings of certain compounds like φρουρά, “watch, guard”, we may discern that in some occurrences ὀράω, probably in connection with the durative aspect of the present, implies a notion of attention or intention in sight that the aorist aspect does not.<sup>11</sup> One could relate these remarks on Greek usage to contemporary theories of sight, for instance to the “extramissionist” vs. “intramissionist” explanations.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately this study would require a long time and a long text. It could instead be possible to speak of an “objective”

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**8** *Il.* 1.587, 3.28, 3.169, 3.306, 5.212, 10.275, 13.99 = 15.286 = 20.344 = 21.54, 14.436, 15.488, 15.600, 16.182, 17.466, 17.646, 18.190, 19.174, 20.342, 22.25, 22.169, 22.236, 23.202, 24.246, 24.392, 24.555. I have listed here all the instances in the *Iliad*, in order to show that the phrase occurs with all the tenses of the verb (ἴδ-, ὀρ-, are relatively frequent, but see also ὄψομαι and ὄπωπα). I further note that the dative without a preposition occurs much more frequently than the dative with ἐν; the instrumental value of the dative is clear. Snell probably looked only at the four items with ἐν, emphasising the locative value (Snell 1975, 23). There are numerous parallel expressions in several modern languages (French *voir de ses yeux*). In Greek, I notice a parallel phrase with the organ used for moving in the dative, βαίνω with ποσί.

**9** For instance *Il.* 14.499 (... ἔτι δ' ὄβριμον ἔγχος | ἦεν ἐν ὀφθαλμῷ), *Il.* 16.741 (... ὀφθαλμοὶ δὲ χαμαὶ πέσον ἐν κονίῃσι).

**10** I also mention λέγω (Hom. ἀγοράω), εἶπον, and εἶρηκα for the concept of “to say, to speak”: for the aorist and perfect, Homer uses ancient verbal roots, which have approximately the same meaning. However, Homer uses ἀγοράω for the present, a verb meaning “publicly speak”, while λέγω means “to pick up, to choose”. For the still more complicated case of verbs of movement verb (e.g. ἔρχομαι, εἶμι, ἦλθον), see Létoublon 1985. See also “to eat”, ἔδω, ἐσθίω, ἔφαγον: even when we cannot recognise the specific semantic features of each stem, we may suppose that there are some. As an argument for justifying this feature, a German specialist once quoted the following proverb: “Liebe Kinder haben viele Name”.

**11** Chantraine 2009, 784–5, s.v. ὀράω: “ὀρά- signifie ‘tenir les yeux sur’ et se rapporte au sujet, non à l’objet et à la perception comme εἶδον.”

**12** See the chapters on sight in Greek philosophy by Rudolph and Nightingale in Squire (2016), and Squire’s introduction (2016, 16): “As for the mechanics of sight, different Greek and Roman schools of thought championed divergent conceptual models. Crucial here are two generic theories about how vision operates, which modern scholars have labelled ‘extramissionist’ and ‘intramissionist’ respectively. According to the first ‘extramissionist’ [...] theory, the sense of sight was understood to emanate from fiery rays actively cast out from the eye, travelling to the thing seen. At the other extreme [...] the atomists [...] understood visible objects as emanating atom-thick replicas (*eidōla*) that moved through space and impacted upon the eye.”

meaning versus a “subjective” one, with the terms “objective” and “subjective” referring to the grammatical, rather than psychological, object or subject of the verb respectively.<sup>13</sup> As Snell remarked in the opening essay of *Die Entdeckung des Geistes*, “Die Auffassung des Menschen bei Homer”, Homeric language actually knows other verbal roots for the notion of sight: he notes that *λεύσσω* keeps, from its etymological link with *λευκός*, a positive nuance, “etwas Helles schauen. Ausserdem heisst es: in die Weite schauen. [...] *λεύσσειν* bezeichnet offenbar bestimmte Gefühl mit, die man beim Sehen, vor allem beim Sehen bestimmter Gegenstände hat.[...] nie wird *λεύσσειν* beim kummervollem oder ängstlichem Sehen gebraucht”.<sup>14</sup> *Δέρκομαι*, with a complete paradigm in Homer, seems more complicated; for the first semantic approach, Snell is probably right in saying “Dementsprechend bezeichnet bei Homer *δέρκεσθαι* nicht so sehr die Funktion des Auges, sondern das Strahlen des Auges, das ein anderer warnimmt”.<sup>15</sup> But this verb also shows uses with the instrumental dative *ὀφθαλμοῖσι* as an equivalent of “to live”, which seems to argue for a kind of synonymy with the suppletive paradigm.<sup>16</sup> Another question arises that I cannot answer here: why the I.-E. root *\*ok<sup>w</sup>-*, which could represent a fundamental verb for the notion of sight, occurs in Greek only in the future and perfect, both usages apparently archaic.<sup>17</sup> Before we leave the language of sight, let us remark that *βλέπω*, which is not used in Homer but is very frequent in classical Greek, seems to cover more or less the meanings of *δέρκεσθαι* and *ὀρώ*.

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**13** The subjective meaning seems also prevalent for the verbal family of *σκεπτ-*, *σκοπ-*. See LSJ<sup>s</sup> s. v. *σκέπτομαι*, “to look about carefully, spy”, *σκοπέω* “to behold, contemplate [...], examine, inspect”.

**14** Snell 1975, 15. But see Chantraine (2009, 608): “‘diriger son regard vers, voir’ [...]; ce verbe exprime l’idée d’un flux visuel rayonnant des yeux, non de l’objet, malgré Treu, *Von Homer zur Lyrik*, 64.”

**15** Snell 1975, 15.

**16** See *Il.* 14.436 (ὃ δ’ ἀμπνύνηται καὶ ἀνέδρακεν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν), *Od.* 19.446 (πῦρ δ’ ὀφθαλμοῖσι δεδορκώς); for the equivalence with “live”, see *Il.* 1.88 (οὗ τις ἐμευ ζῶντος καὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ δερκομένοιο) and *Od.* 16.439 (ζῶντός γ’ ἐμέθεν καὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ δερκομένοιο).

**17** Regarding *ὄψομαι* and *ὄπωπα*, I call attention to the fact that the Greek future tense stems from the I.-E. desiderative mood. This is especially clear in the middle voice. As far as the perfect *ὄπωπα* is concerned, this appears to be an archaic form on account of the vowel *o*, reduplication and lengthening. Snell’s view that the present tense *ὄσομαι* seems frequent is negligible since it occurs only once at *Il.* 22.356 (ἦ σ’εὺ γιγνώσκων προτίσσομαι).

## The theatre of the *Iliad*

I propose to look at the *Iliad* as theatre, a theatre created before the term was even coined.<sup>18</sup> The poet puts on stage in a large-scale spectacle the struggle for power through the battles for Troy. He shows us a spectacle viewed by people who act as mediators for the epic audience. Our position is paradoxical since theatre is generally defined by characters shown as both acting and speaking for themselves. Epic narrative, on the other hand, describes characters in the third person. Although Homer often uses direct discourse, the war does not primarily proceed through these discourses, but rather through the ways that the narrative makes us “see” a spectacle with eyes other than our real, physical ones. Laura Slatkin’s analysis of “Tragic Visualizing in the *Iliad*” starts from the verbal form ἐνόησε, “he noticed”, showing how the narrative incorporates visual perception into the whole mental process. It is this process of seeing that creates the dynamics of battle and gives the *Iliad* a tragic tone.<sup>19</sup>

A Jenny S. Clay’s 2011 book demonstrates this well, first on a general plane in the chapter called “The sighted Muse”, and then more specifically in her analysis of “Envisioning Troy” from *Iliad* 12 to 17. In the third and last chapter, “Homer’s Trojan Theater”, Clay studies *spatial forms and paths* and *memory* in a very interesting manner, showing the *hodological* nature, that is the specific pathways, of cognitive mapping in Homer.<sup>20</sup> For my part, I shall develop an understanding of the main devices that the narrative of the *Iliad* uses to enable us to see this theatre, from Achilles’ anger in Book 1 to Achilles and Priam seeing each other in Book 24, feeling an increasing tension close to that of tragedy as the plot develops. I do not wish to ignore the ongoing discussions on the unity of the *Iliad* and the stratification of the text,<sup>21</sup> however I consider it a legitimate method to study the Homeric text as it was transmitted through centuries, from a literary point of view.<sup>22</sup>

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**18** On the link between θεάτρον, the verb θεάομαι and the noun θαῦμα, see Chantraine 2009, 408–9, s. v. θέα “vue, spectacle, contemplation”. Θεάτρον does not actually appear in Greek before the Classical period (LSJ<sup>9</sup> referring to Hdt., Th., Lys.).

**19** Slatkin 2007, 19–20, esp. 19: “[I] hope to suggest how the characters’ lines of vision, in the various directions they take, may offer additional perspective on the *Iliad*’s stringent and subtle intimations of tragedy”; and 20: “An elaborated instance of this, decisive for the poem’s plot, is Achilles’ sighting – *enoēse* – of the wounded Machaon, which prompts him to send Patroclus to the ships of the Achaeans”. See also Hesk 2013.

**20** Clay 2011, 96–119.

**21** See particularly West 2011 and the general problematics of Andersen and Haug 2012.

**22** See, for instance, de Jong 2004.

It is well known that in the *Republic* Plato rejects the dialogue between Chryses and Agamemnon in the beginning of the *Iliad* because of its quality of *mimesis*, which might let the audience believe they are in the presence of Chryses and Agamemnon themselves rather than being in the presence of a narrator.<sup>23</sup>

However, I intend to show that *enargeia*, “the process of bringing the subject matter vividly before the eyes” (Webb 1997), does not rely on dialogue alone in the *Iliad*.<sup>24</sup> The Homeric narrator lets us *see* a spectacle, and especially war as a spectacle, through means other than dialogue, beginning with Achilles’ *mēnis*, which the proem states is the very subject of the *epos*.<sup>25</sup> The whole of the *Iliad* depicts different conflict situations through the use of various devices. The war between Achaeans and Trojans is the backdrop to this theatre, but the internal conflict in the camp of the Achaeans between Achilles and Agamemnon is the actual departure point of the narrative.<sup>26</sup> I will follow the thread of the various scenes the narrator allows us to “see”, referring to Purves 2010 and Allen-Hornblower 2016 to analyse the general notions of vision, watching, and the spectacular more accurately.

## Achilles’ Anger

The word *mēnis*, used in the proem, expresses an unusual kind of anger, with a sacred, religious aspect, linking it to Apollo’s anger at verses 9–12. It might also call attention to the fact that Apollo and Achilles are ritual antagonists.<sup>27</sup> Let us note some visual details of the narrative. Achilles’ anger is characterised by his gestures, his eyes, and the insults he hurls towards Agamemnon:

Τὸν δ’ ἄρ’ ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη πόδας ὠκύς Ἀχιλλεύς·  
ὦ μοι ἀναιδεῖην ἐπιεμένε κερδαλέοφρον (Il. 1.148–49)

Then looking darkly at him Achilleus of the swift feet spoke  
O wrapped in shamelessness, with your mind always on profit.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Plat. *Rsp.* 392e–393b. On Plato and *Mimesis*, see Halliwell 2002 who analyses in depth the evolution of Plato on this question from Book 3 to 10 of the *Republic*.

<sup>24</sup> On the concept of *enargeia* in Greek theoretical thought see mainly Webb 1997, 2009, Lévy and Pernot 1997, Dubel 1997, Plett 2012. On *enargeia* in Homer, see Clay 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Homeric Greek distinguishes several kinds of anger; the ordinary one is referred to most often with the words *χόλος* and *κότος*, whereas the word *μῆνις* refers to a divine anger (see Muellner 1996). On anger among Greek expressions of emotions, see Cairns 2003, Most 2003, Konstan 2006. On anger and language, see Walsh 2005, with an analysis of *χόλος* and *κότος*.

<sup>26</sup> Allan and Cairns 2011 show the importance of the clash of individual interests with those of the community.

<sup>27</sup> See Nagy 1979, 289–95, and on the mirror-effect between Achilles and Apollo, Austin 1999.

<sup>28</sup> All translations of the *Iliad* are taken from Lattimore 1951 except where specified.

οἶνοβαρές, κυνὸς ὄμματ' ἔχων, κραδίην δ' ἐλάφοιο (*Il.* 1.225)

You wine sack, with a dog's eyes, with a deer's heart.

δημοβόρος βασιλεὺς ἐπεὶ οὐτιδανοῖσιν ἀνάσσεις· (*Il.* 1.231)

King who feed on your people, since you rule nonentities.

ἔλκετο δ' ἐκ κολεοῖο μέγα ξίφος, [...] (*Il.* 1.194)

and was drawing from its scabbard the great sword [...]

ἄψ δ' ἐς κουλεὸν ὥσε μέγα ξίφος, [...] (*Il.* 1.220)

and thrust the great blade back into the scabbard [...]

As Erving Goffman defines it, referring to Georg Simmel's "ideal sphere", insulting somebody aims to destroy their *face*, which means both their self-confidence and the image presented by that self to other people.<sup>29</sup> I do not consider it an exaggeration to apply this concept to Achilles trying to verbally destroy Agamemnon's *honour*, which seems to be equivalent to the Homeric word αἰδώς. Despite the differences between the approaches of Goffman and Cairns, I think that the repetition of *honour* in the extract from Simmel's text that Goffman quotes is indicative of similarities.<sup>30</sup> In the short list of Achilles' insults in this passage, it may be noted how often the insulted person is assimilated to an animal.<sup>31</sup> Other passages likening a male warrior to a woman could lead one to conclude that the insults aim to diminish the human individual further down in an imaginary anthropological scale that ascends from animal at the bottom to male hero at the top. Language appears as a method of fighting, as the narrator says at *Il.* 1.304 and as Diomedes states at *Il.* 9.32–33.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, I suggest that insulting the adversary (be it the enemy or a rival from the same side) might, in Homeric battle, be part of a ritualistic sequence consisting of a challenge, an act of fighting, and a solemn proclamation of victory.<sup>33</sup> In the case of Achilles and Agamemnon, there will be no physical

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29 "[This] sphere cannot be penetrated, unless the personality value of the individual is thereby destroyed. A sphere of this sort is placed around man by his honor. Language poignantly designates an insult to one's honor as 'coming too close;' the radius of this sphere marks, as it were, the distance whose trespassing by another person insults one's honor." (Goffman 2005, 62–63).

30 On αἰδώς in Homer and thereafter, see Cairns 1993.

31 Here particularly dog and deer / fawn.

32 Both passages quoted by Barker 2009, 61–2. The quasi-formula of 1.304 μαχεσσαμένω ἐπέεσσιν is particularly striking. Diomedes' maxim invoking θέμις gives Barker his subtitle: "It's the custom to fight with words". On insults in Homer, see also Slatkin 1988.

33 Létoublon 1983, 1986. On the importance of insult rituals in general anthropology, see the frequency of the word *insult* in Philipsen & Carbaugh's bibliography (1986). On "fighting words" in Homer, see Walsh 2005, Hesk 2006 with reference to some parallel rituals in Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse, known as *flying*.



fighting, but the defeat of the adversary achieved by words is just as impressive as the effect of ritualised fighting among the Achaean camp.

In verse 245, Achilles violently throws away the sceptre that he holds (ποτὶ δὲ σκῆπτρον βάλε γαίῃ). This is a strong contrast to his lengthy solemn oath in v. 232–39, in which the symbolic value of the sceptre implies that, although not expressly stated in the text, he must brandish it before taking an oath: the gesture of throwing it away holds even more power in the text on account of the fact that the verses do not mention his taking up and brandishing the sceptre.<sup>34</sup>

ἀλλ' ἔκ τοι ἐρέω καὶ ἐπὶ μέγαν ὄρκον ὁμοῦμαι·  
ναὶ μὰ τόδε σκῆπτρον, τὸ μὲν οὐ ποτε φύλλα καὶ ὄζυος  
φύσει, ἐπεὶ δὴ πρῶτα τομὴν ἐν ὄρεσσι λέλοιπεν,  
οὐδ' ἀναθηλήσει· περὶ γάρ ῥά ἐ χαλκὸς ἔλειψε  
φύλλα τε καὶ φλοιόν· νῦν αὐτέ μιν νῆες Ἀχαιῶν  
ἐν παλάμῃς φορέουσι δικασπόλοι, οἳ τε θέμιστας  
πρὸς Διὸς εἰρύαται· ὃ δέ τοι μέγας ἔσσεται ὄρκος. (Il. 1.233–39)

But I will tell you this and swear a great oath upon it:  
in the name of this sceptre, which never again will bear leaf nor  
branch, now that it has left behind the cut stump in the mountains,  
nor shall it ever blossom again, since the bronze blade stripped  
back and leafage, and now at last the sons of the Achaians  
carry it in their hands in state when they administer  
the justice of Zeus. And this shall be a great oath before you.

This contrast strongly dramatises the narrative. The tension induces old Nestor to enter the *agon*, intervening with his famous “sweeter than honey” words (1.249).<sup>35</sup>

The narrator of the *Iliad* may be considered the first spectator of this “theatre”: he *sees* a spectacle as enacted before the eyes of his mind, and he transposes it as narrative. It is difficult for us now, living in a time of literacy, to understand this visual aspect of the narrative since we usually read the *Iliad*, instead of hearing it as the original form required.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> I am thinking of Alan Boegehold's title 1999: “When a gesture was expected”. On the sceptre as a symbol of Zeus' *themis* and power, see Hammer 2008, 117–18, with references to previous bibliography.

<sup>35</sup> Kirk 1985, 78–79. On Nestor's mediation in this passage, on its failure and on Athena's intervention, see Barker 2009, 47–50, esp. 48: “The fact that the *skeptron* – the symbol of the right to speak in public – lies on the ground, moreover, suggests that Nestor's intervention comes too late. Divine intervention has already moved the conflict on and beyond.”

<sup>36</sup> Létoublon 2014a (*EAGLL*), with bibliographical references.

It has often been remarked since Antiquity how artificial, sometimes even unbelievable, this spectacle appears, if juxtaposed with the chronology of the war;<sup>37</sup> for instance, the Catalogue of Ships in Book 2 would find its right place at the beginning of the war, but seems incongruous in the last year of the war, the chronological frame of the *Iliad*.<sup>38</sup> The same holds true for the episode of Book 3 called the *Teichoscopia*, where Helen is seen first through the critical eyes of Trojan old men, then depicted as describing for King Priam the main leaders of the Achaeans whom she herself sees at the bottom of the walls.<sup>39</sup> At the end of her speech, Helen expresses astonishment for not seeing her brothers Castor and Polydeuces. The absence of the Dioscouroi might be explained as a clumsy attempt to make this episode agree with the chosen moment of the war. Nevertheless, the Homeric *enargeia*, by holding the audience spellbound by the spectacle, often makes us forget this artificiality.

Even though Achilles' anger begins in Book 1, the audience must wait a long time before seeing him, the Best of the Achaeans, fighting. After his captive Briseis is taken away from him, Achilles stays in isolation, so that we see him still locked up in his loneliness during the visit of the embassy (Book 9). He will not take part in the fighting before Book 19. In this way, the first theatre of war in the West puts on stage a hero who is usually either absent or concealed from sight, a hero for whom the audience must wait for almost 18 books out of the 24. Achilles' anger provokes his absence from the scene, and thus generates frustration in the imaginary spectator whom the narrative creates.

For someone who is awaiting dramatic scenes of epic fighting, Books 2 and 3 of the *Iliad* appear very disappointing; in Book 2, we hear first of Agamemnon's torment and his misleading dream, then of an assembly of the Achaeans and the famous catalogue of Achaean ships, followed by a shorter catalogue of Achaean horses, which allows a brief remark on Achilles' sulking (763–79), and eventually the catalogue of the Trojans and their allies. In Book 3, the poet offers the audience a fight between Paris-Alexander and Menelaus. Although we are far from the violence which will afterwards rage in the *Iliad*, the theatrical effect is nevertheless very strong. The meeting of the two fighters on the battlefield consists first of a verbal exchange, which turns into a proposal for a pact.<sup>40</sup> Thereupon the gods draw Helen onto the walls and the *Teichoscopia*

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37 For the chronology of the *Iliad* compared to that of the myth of Trojan War, see Létoublon 2011.

38 See Kullmann 2012, with bibliographical references.

39 Kirk 1985, 286–301. See further Tsagalis 2003, who emphasises the process of seeing in the whole sequence.

40 Elmer 2012.

takes place (discussed above), which could perhaps be seen as a diversion from the combat. The link with the following sequence, the conclusion of the pact, intervenes at line 245. We then have a glance at a sacrifice with prayers. Individual action alternates with collective action, with the vivid juridico-religious vocabulary (3.245 φέρον ὄρκια πιστά, 252 ἴν' ὄρκια πιστὰ τάμητε, 256 φιλότιτα καὶ ὄρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες, 269 ὄρκια πιστὰ σύναγον, 286 τιμὴν δ' ... ἀποτινέμεν ἢν τίν' ἔοικεν, 288–89 τιμὴν ... τίνειν, 290 εἵνεκα ποινηῆς) insisting on faithfulness to the oaths and on the proper payment to be returned.

A collective prayer echoes Agamemnon's prayer, simultaneously uttered by both armies sitting in circle around their leaders.<sup>41</sup> This passage shows an exceptional moment of balance in the war, where the warriors delegate their destiny to their representatives, under the sacred guarantee of the gods. Collective speech, religiously sanctified by prayer and sacrifice, unites both camps, “building community” as Elmer's title excellently says. This is the moment where the poet of the *Iliad* shows most clearly the key political theme of the epic: the balance between enemies, symbolised by common prayer and sacrifice, cannot resolve the war situation, but, in a common and solemn decision, the issue is entrusted to single combat, provided that one warrior dies and the other is victorious.<sup>42</sup> However, this human solution established by human society cannot be a true solution since it does not please the gods. In a single verse, it is implied that Zeus is not pleased at this prayer,<sup>43</sup> but it is Aphrodite who will take Paris away from the battlefield. Book 3 shows a kind of contradiction between a balance in the human theatre of war, which is almost close to peace, and the invisible theatre of the gods, where war and the fall of Troy are the inescapable agenda. The feature that my present discussion is interested in is that of the warriors and their leaders, sitting around the fray like theatre spectators, observing the single combat between Paris and Menelaus. The narrative thus establishes a mediation by “real” spectators between the actual show and the imaginary spectators that we are.

In this way, in Book 3 the narrator seems to circumvent the spectacle of war, first by the solemn pact, then by Aphrodite seizing Paris away from the scene. Subsequently, however, we actually meet with many of the fighting scenes that we were expecting.<sup>44</sup> Though a superficial impression may be felt

<sup>41</sup> For a closer study of this prayer, see Létoublon 2011 b, 293–4 and bibliographical references.

<sup>42</sup> Létoublon 1983, Wilson 2002, Elmer 2012.

<sup>43</sup> *Il.* 3.302 Ὡς ἔφαν, οὐδ' ἄρα πῶ σφιν ἐπεκράαινε Κρονίων.

<sup>44</sup> King Priam's departure after the sacrifice has a symbolic resonance: he does not want to see his son fighting against Menelaus (3.306–7 ... ἐπεὶ οὐ πῶ τλήσομ' ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὄρασθαι | μαρνάμενον φίλον υἱόν ...).

by some members of the audience, dullness is avoided by alternation between contest and scramble on one side, and the great number of deaths<sup>45</sup> and *aristeia* scenes on the other, combined in typical scenes.<sup>46</sup> In this way, some purple passages, consisting in *aristeiai* and single combats, stand out against the general backcloth of isolated fighting.<sup>47</sup> These clashes imply a very large number of deaths, and generally the narrator, far from leaving the dead in anonymity, gives their identity (name and patronym), sometimes even providing a short biography. In the case of Simoeisios, Anthemion's son (*Il.* 5.478–489), one could almost speak of a funeral elegy.<sup>48</sup> Although there are some inconsistencies,<sup>49</sup> the catalogues of deaths involve a larger number of individuals than modern human memory can easily master, indicating that oral memory had mastered specific methods of memorising, nowadays forgotten.<sup>50</sup>

## The conquest of the Gate and the space of the fighting

It is important to note that, in the war episodes that occupy Books 5 to 15, apart from the Embassy in Book 9 and the spy mission called the *Doloneia* in Book 10,<sup>51</sup> the battlefield moves quickly from the Trojan plain to the inner lines of the Achaean camp at the wall they had built, to the point that the Achaean ships are endangered, threatening their ability to return home. This movement seems to me to be symbolic of the dramatisation of the terrain, just as happens in modern games, for instance in football, when one team is playing primarily on the opponent's half of the field, it is very likely to win. In our case, the Trojans are about to penetrate the opposing camp. The conquest of their gate then takes on huge strategic importance, which the narrative emphasises in this passage, chosen because of its visual interest, especially in both similes,

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45 Variety in this kind of death scene is brought about in particular by the different types of wounds (see Friedrich 2005 with the appendix by Saunders).

46 See Arend 1933, Fenik 1968, Létoublon 1983 and 2003.

47 Diomedes in Book 5 and 6, Hector in Book 11, Idomeneus in Book 13, Sarpedon and Patroclus in Book 16.

48 Létoublon 1999b, 2003.

49 Wilson 2000.

50 Yates 1966, Carruthers 1990, Clay 2011.

51 The *Doloneia* occurs in the night, which is of course a highly *visual* element. See Dué and Ebbott 2010, Danek 2012, Bierl 2012, Hesk 2013.

although good commentators sometimes leave it aside, for example Hainsworth.<sup>52</sup>

[...] οἱ δ' οὔασι πάντες ἄκουον,  
 ἴθυσαν δ' ἐπὶ τείχος ἀολλέες· οἱ μὲν ἔπειτα  
 κροσσάων ἐπέβαινον ἀκαχμένα δούρατ' ἔχοντες,  
 Ἔκτωρ δ' ἀρπάξας λαῶν φέρεν, ὅς ῥα πυλάων  
 ἐστήκει πρόσθε πρυμνὸς παχύς, αὐτὰρ ὑπερθεν  
 ὄξυς ἔην· τὸν δ' οὐ κε δύ' ἀνέρε δήμου ἀρίστῳ  
 ῥῆϊδίως ἐπ' ἄμαξαν ἀπ' οὐδεὸς ὀχλίσειαν,  
 οἷοι νῦν βροτοὶ εἰσ'· ὁ δὲ μιν ῥέα πάλλε καὶ οἶος. [...]  
 ὧς Ἔκτωρ ἰθὺς σανίδων φέρε λαῶν ἀείρας,  
 αἶ ῥα πύλας εἴρυντο πύκα στιβαρῶς ἀραρυίας  
 δικλίδας ὑψηλάς· [...]  
 ῥῆξε δ' ἀπ' ἀμφοτέρους θαιρούς· πέσε δὲ λίθος εἴσω  
 βριθοσύνη, μέγα δ' ἀμφὶ πύλαι μύκον, οὐδ' ἄρ' ὀχῆες  
 ἐσχεθέτην, σανίδες δὲ διέτμαγεν ἄλλυδις ἄλλη  
 λαὸς ὑπὸ ῥιπῆς· ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἔσθορε φαίδιμος Ἔκτωρ  
 νυκτὶ θοῆ ἀτάλαντος ὑπώπια· λάμπε δὲ χαλκῶ  
 σμερδαλέω, τὸν ἔεστο περὶ χροῖ, δοιὰ δὲ χερσὶ  
 δοῦρ' ἔχεν· οὐ κέν τις μιν ἐρύκακεν ἀντιβολήσας  
 νόσφι θεῶν ὄτ' ἐσάλτο πύλας· πυρὶ δ' ὄσσε δεδήει. (Il.12.443–66)

[...] and they all gave ear to him  
 and steered against the wall in a pack, and at once gripping  
 still their edged spears caught and swarmed up the wall's projections.  
 Meanwhile Hektor snatched up a stone and stood before the gates  
 and carried it along; it was blunt-massed at the base, but the upper  
 end was sharp; two men, the best in all a community,  
 could not easily hoist it up from the ground to a wagon,  
 of men such as men as now, but he alone lifted and shook it. [...]  
 So Hektor lifting the stone carried it straight for the door leaves  
 which filled the gateway ponderously close-fitted together.  
 These were high and twofold [...]  
 [...] and smashed the hinges at either side, and the stone crashed  
 ponderously in, and the gates groaned deep, and door-bars  
 could not hold, but the leaves were smashed to a wreckage of splinters  
 under the stone's impact. The glorious Hektor burst in  
 with dark face like sudden night, but he shone with the ghastly  
 glitter of bronze that girded his skin, and carried two spears  
 in his hands. No one could have stood up against him, and stopped him,  
 except the gods, when he burst in the gates; and his eyes flashed fire.

<sup>52</sup> On this passage, I disagree with Hainsworth (1993, 363) who thinks that “the thread of the narrative is not easily followed”.

The role of Homeric similes in this passage is striking: far from moving the narrative away from us, they play a large part in its dramatisation. While the first simile emphasises the weight of the huge stone Hector lifts without trouble, since for him it is as light as a fleece,<sup>53</sup> the next simile assimilates Hector to the speed of night (νυκτὶ θοῆ ἄταλαντος ὑπώπια· λάμπε δὲ χαλκῶ), showing him in a *chiaroscuro à la Rembrandt* which also seems very spectacular. The similes strongly contribute to making us spectators of this conquest of the Achaean camp by the best of the Trojans.

## Figuring the spectators

### “Real” Spectators

The narrator sometimes visually notes the interest of the audience in the spectacle through the eyes of “real” spectators,<sup>54</sup> as we have seen above in Book 3. I quote a passage from Book 7 where Athena and Apollo are depicted as spectators in the appearance of birds observing the fight from a high oak tree:<sup>55</sup>

κάδ δ' ἄρ' Ἀθηναίη τε καὶ ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων  
 ἐξέσθην ὄρνισιν εὐοικότεσ ἀἴγυπιοῖσι  
 φηγῶ ἐφ' ὑψηλῆ πατρὸς Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο  
 ἀνδράσι τερπόμενοι· (Il. 7.58–62)

and Athene and the lord of the silver bow, Apollo,  
 assuming the likenesses of birds, of vultures, settled  
 aloft the great oak tree of their father, Zeus of the aegis,  
 taking their ease [and watching] these men

They are not just any kind of birds, but birds of prey (αἴγυπιοί) who rejoice (τερπόμενοι) seeing men fighting. I note that Athena and Apollo are not usually on the same side in the war, but, exceptionally, they sit together here for the same pleasant spectacle.<sup>56</sup> Of course, the Games organised by Achilles in hon-

<sup>53</sup> On the extended simile comparing the huge stone to a light fleece, see Scott 1974, 49 and 112.

<sup>54</sup> On spectators in the *Iliad*, see particularly Purves 2010, Myers 2011, 59–90 “Epic Experienced as Spectacle”, Lovatt 2013, Allen-Hornblower 2016.

<sup>55</sup> “Presumably that [oak tree] of 22,” says Kirk (1990, 239), who asks whether the gods are compared to vultures or have taken their form. He does not remark that Athene and Apollo do not appear friendly sitting together elsewhere in the *Iliad*, since they support enemy camps. On Apollo and Athena as an “internal audience” in this passage, see Myers 2011, 95.

<sup>56</sup> Johansson 2012, 83–88 and 246.

our of Patroclus in Book 23 are a lengthy example of real spectators put on stage.

## Imaginary Spectators

The poet sometimes creates imaginary spectators by using such linguistic features addressing them in the second person and using the optative mood with the particle *κε*:

φαίης κ' ἀκμῆτας καὶ ἀτειρέας ἀλλήλοισιν  
ἄντεσθ' ἐν πολέμῳ, ὡς ἐσσυμένῳς ἐμάχοντο. (*Il.* 15.697–98)

You would say that they faced each other unbruised, unwearied  
in the fighting, from the speed in which they went for each other.

As Jenny S. Clay (2011, 25) points out, [Longinus] comments on this passage, stating that this linguistic use fuels the imagination of the audience and their implication in the spectacle.<sup>57</sup> She also notes that “most often the spectator’s powers of careful observation, especially vision, are emphasized”, quoting *Il.* 16.638–40 and 4.539–44 and concluding, “indeed, like Athena here, the poet leads his hearers safely by the hand. Thus the passage reveals the intimate link between Muse, poet, and audience.” A similar effect is found at *Il.* 13.343–44 (μάλα κεν θρασκευάρδιος εἶη | ὅς τότε γηθήσειεν ἰδὼν πόνον οὐδ' ἀκάχοιτο). Long before narratology dealt with Homer, Leaf’s commentary created the term *imaginary spectator* for this situation.<sup>58</sup>

## Zeus’ Scales

Zeus’ scales, mentioned in two passages of the *Iliad*, may also symbolise the dramatisation of a spectacle. In a passage from Book 8, which is less known than the weighing of Hector’s fate in Book 22, the formula of the scale pan leaning on one side (ῥέπε δ' αἴσιμον ἦμαρ ...) shows who is the loser:<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> [Longinus] 26.1, see Clay 2011, 24: “[...] the direct address ‘makes the hearer seem to find himself in the middle of dangers’ (ἐν μέσσοις τοῖς κινδύνοις ποιούσα τὸν ἀκροατὴν δοκεῖν στρέφασθαι)”.

<sup>58</sup> Allen-Hornblower 2016, 23.

<sup>59</sup> On the golden scales of Zeus, Kirk 1990, 303–4, Dietrich 1964.

καὶ τότε δὴ χρύσεια πατὴρ ἐτίθαινε τάλαντα·  
 ἐν δ' ἐτίθει δύο κῆρε τανηλεγέος θανάτιο  
 Τρώων θ' ἵπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων,  
 ἔλκε δὲ μέσσα λαβῶν· ῥέπε δ' αἴσιμον ἦμαρ Ἀχαιῶν. (*Il.* 8.69–72)

Then the father balanced his golden scales, and in them  
 he set two fateful portion of death, which lays men prostrate,  
 for Trojans, breakers of horses, and bronze-armoured Achaians,  
 and balanced it by the middle. The Achaians' death-day was heaviest.

The spectacular aspect of the passage lies in the dynamics of the scale pan expressed by the verb ῥέπε, which is clearly adapted from the same parallel formula used for Hector's fate at *Il.* 22.212:

ἔλκε δὲ μέσσα λαβῶν· ῥέπε δ' Ἑκτορος αἴσιμον ἦμαρ.

and balanced it by the middle; and Hektor's death-day was heavier.

Without entering into a technical linguistic analysis, I underline the use of the imperfect here, for ἔλκε as well as ῥέπε, in both passages: Zeus' movement and the scale's leaning are described in terms of duration rather than as sudden moves (as they would be if expressed by aorists).<sup>60</sup>

## The Poet Addressing the Character

The poet sometimes uses the second person to directly address his character. This disruption in the usual pragmatic conventions of a neutral narrative which refers to the characters in the third person<sup>61</sup> is particularly striking in Book 16: introducing a list of his recent exploits, the address to Patroclus occurs when this character is about to be fatally injured:<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> The fact that the object does not exist except in our imagination, as is the case for many other mythological objects, does not impel the imagination to play with it.

<sup>61</sup> See the articles republished together under the general title “L'homme dans la langue” (“Man in language”) in Benveniste 1966, 225–257.

<sup>62</sup> This device was studied specifically by Yamagata 1989 and by Allen-Hornblower (2012, 3), who recalls the discussion on the point of a purely metrical value defended by Milman Parry, as opposed to the emotional value defended by his son, Adam Parry. The subset of the three apostrophes included with speech formulas (16.20, 16.744 and 16.843), and their comparison with the apostrophes addressed to Menelaus are especially interesting. Allen-Hornblower 2016 develops her earlier study further by trying to show that Achilles is the hidden character who addresses Patroclus. De Jong 2009 links those apostrophes to the figure called *metalepsis*. See also the accurate studies by Dubel 2011, Peigney 2011 and Perceau 2011 in the wake of a collective study of the poet's voice.



Ἐνθα τίνα πρῶτον τίνα δ' ὕστατον ἐξενάριξας  
Πατρόκλεις, ὅτε δὴ σε θεοὶ θάνατον δὲ κάλεσσαν; (Il. 16.692–94)

Then who was it you slaughtered first, who was the last one  
Patroklos, as the gods called you to your death?

In a recent paper, Emily Allen–Hornblower (2012, 3) demonstrates that the series of addresses to Patroclus by the poet corresponds to “new heights in his destructive *aristeia* that seem at first glance to be incongruous, even at odds with the blatantly pathetic contexts in which the others occur. [...] This apostrophe marks a juncture at which a significant step is taken by Patroclus away from the boundaries set by Achilles, and closer to his doom. Each new apostrophe contributes to generate a sense of apprehension in the audience and to gradually build up the tension underlying the entire episode of Patroclus’ glory on the battlefield that will culminate in his death.”

The third and last apostrophe to Patroclus introduces his final words and leaves us with the tragic image of the vanquished dying hero and the triumphant victor, whose death we also know is imminent:

ὡς πού σε προσέφη, σοὶ δὲ φρένας ἄφροني πείθε.  
Τὸν δ' ὀλιγοδρανέων προσέφησ Πατρόκλεες ἵππευ· (Il. 16.842–43)

In some such  
manner he spoke to you, and persuaded the fool’s heart in you.  
And now, dying, you answered him, o rider Patroklos.

Note that the use of the second person verb προσέφησ, remarked upon by Allen–Hornblower, is indicated by the accusative pronoun σε, σοί, in the former verse, emphasising the tragic face-to-face dialogue.<sup>63</sup> In those passages, the poet’s audience is strikingly confronted with the character who is addressed in the second person, which is a powerful device for dramatising the narrative. Once again, this device is not visual, strictly speaking, but it strongly contributes to retaining the interest of the audience. It could perhaps be compared to the film device through which a character detaches himself from the screen to enter a place as part of the audience.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> The same formula occurs for Patroclus’ and Hector’s death, but never anywhere else: ψυχὴ δ’ ἐκ ῥεθέων πταμένη Ἄϊδος δὲ βεβήκει | ὄν πότμον γοῶσα λιποῦσ’ ἀνδροτήτα καὶ ἦβη (Il. 16.856–57 = 22.362–63); cf. Létoublon 2001.

<sup>64</sup> See, for instance, *The Purple Rose of Cairo* by Woody Allen (1985). The comparison is explicitly developed in de Jong 2009.

## Duel and challenge

The large-scale composition of the *Iliad*<sup>65</sup> necessitates that the major heroes be kept away from death in preparation for the major clashes in the last part. The single combats do not always lead to an actual victory with a dead or dying enemy until the combat between Hector and Patroclus in Book 16. The death of Patroclus is followed by those of several Trojans, which Achilles kills in revenge, and eventually by the great duel between Achilles and Hector in Book 22, the tragic node of the *Iliad*, as we shall see later. The dramatisation of these individual combats is characterised by several speeches, often very long, which seem unrealistic in the situation. However, these are typical scenes with common features. These typical scenes generally entail a genealogical report,<sup>66</sup> which aims to justify a pretention to victory, and a challenge sometimes combined with insults. Certain challenges are not expressed through direct discourse, but through indirect discourse, using the verb *prokalizeto*, *prokalissato*. In both cases, as I have shown elsewhere, this is a verbal ritual, through which the fighters aim to ensure their supremacy.<sup>67</sup> The combat will thereafter prove the masculine values indicated in the oral challenge, and the narrative shows this succession of events and speeches as a dramatised spectacle:

Αἰνεΐας δ' ἀπόρουσε σὺν ἀσπίδι δουρί τε μακρῷ  
 δεΐσας μὴ πῶς οἱ ἐρυσσαίατο νεκρὸν Ἀχαιοί.  
 ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' αὐτῷ βαΐνε λέων ὡς ἀλκί πεποιθώς,  
 πρόσθε δέ οἱ δόρυ τ' ἔσχε καὶ ἀσπίδα πάντοσ' εἴσῃν,  
 τὸν κτάμεναι μεμαῶς ὅς τις τοῦ γ' ἀντίος ἔλθοι  
 σμερδαλέα ἰάχων· ὃ δὲ χερμάδιον λάβε χειρὶ  
 Τυδεΐδης μέγα ἔργον ὃ οὐ δύο γ' ἄνδρε φέροισιν,  
 οἷοι νῦν βροτοὶ εἰσ'· ὃ δὲ μιν ῥέα πάλλε καὶ οἶος,  
 τῷ βάλεν Αἰνεΐαιο κατ' ἰσχίον ἔνθά τε μηρὸς  
 ἰσχύϊ ἐνστρέφεται, κοτύλην δέ τέ μιν καλέουσι·  
 θλάσσε δέ οἱ κοτύλην, πρὸς δ' ἄμφω ῥῆξε τένοντε. (*Il.* 5.297–307)

But Aineias sprang to the ground with shield and with long spear,  
 for fear that somehow the Achaians might haul off the body,  
 and like a lion in the pride of his strength stood over him  
 holding before him the perfect circle of his shield and the spear  
 and raging to cut down any man who might come to face him,  
 crying a terrible cry. But Tydeus' son in his hand caught

<sup>65</sup> Sheppard 1922, Reinhardt 1961, Taplin 1992, Stanley 1993, Létoublon 2001.

<sup>66</sup> The longest genealogical report is given by Aeneas in combat with Achilles (*Iliad* 20.213–241).

<sup>67</sup> See Létoublon 1983. Cf. Camerotto 2010.

up a stone, a huge thing which no two men could carry  
 such as men are now, but by himself he lightly hefted it.  
 He threw, and caught Alneias in the hip, in the place where the hip-bone  
 turns inside the thigh, the place men call the cup-socket.  
 It smashed the cup-socket and broke the tendons both sides of it.

Note in this episode of the fight between Aeneas and Diomedes several visual details: the movements (ἀπόρrouσε, βαῖνε etc.), the specific details of Aeneas' arms, shield and spear (σὺν ἀσπίδι δουρί τε μακρῶ), the lion simile of 298–301, and the noisy manifestations of anger (σμερδαλέα ἰάχων). The brutal rhythmic interruption at *Il.* 5.301 may express the spectators' (and Aeneas') surprise at seeing Diomedes' gesture of taking a huge stone and throwing it against his adversary. Although Kirk, after others, points out several similarities to Book 17,<sup>68</sup> this passage can also be considered original on account of the weapon used by Diomedes, the wound it inflicts,<sup>69</sup> and the interest that the anatomical word κοτύλη invites.

Let us also notice some visual details of the single fight between Ajax and Hector in Book 7. After the description of Ajax's extraordinary shield made by Tychios (220–23) and the usual exchange of speeches (225–43), we eventually watch the fight itself (244–72):<sup>70</sup> Hector throws his spear and pierces six of Ajax's seven shield layers<sup>71</sup> without wounding him. Ajax then throws his spear, which only brushes Hector's shield and breastplate since he has bent aside to avoid a mortal blow. Each of them recovers his spear and runs against the other. Using a simile, the narrative depicts them as two lions or two boars. Hector's spear touches Ajax's shield, but its bronze peak twists, so Ajax uses his own spear to touch Hector's *aspis* and wound him at the neck. Hector steps backwards, picks up a stone and throws it against Ajax's *sakos*. Ajax throws a still larger stone, which causes Hector to tumble. Apollo lifts him up, and the heralds Talthybios and Idaios come to interrupt the fight because night is falling; this seems to be a way of proclaiming that they are fighters of equal value, instead of one combatant making the usual victorious discourse already mentioned.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Kirk 1990, 91.

<sup>69</sup> The formula ἀμφὶ δὲ ὄσσε κελαινὴ νύξ ἐκάλυψε at line 310 implies that death is imminent for Aeneas, but the fatal outcome is prevented by his mother, the goddess Aphrodite, who takes him away from the location of the combat.

<sup>70</sup> However, the narrative does not allow us to see whether Hector is fighting from a chariot or on foot (Kirk 1990, 267–68).

<sup>71</sup> Here we understand the usefulness of the former shield description.

<sup>72</sup> See however Kirk 1990, 271: "The surprise is the greater since Ajax is apparently winning, having suffered no real damage from his opponent".

## Achilles' spear as a character

The terms of our theme “theatre of war” suggest that individual characters stand out, be they heroes or not, depicted as such on an ongoing basis or not. In the last part of the *Iliad* however, in addition to the strongly dramatised presence of the heroes, a remarkable object intervenes with the status of a quasi-character: Achilles' spear, called by the common name ἔγχος (*egkhos*) but also several times by the derived adjective *Pēlias*, which then becomes a kind of proper name through the fact that it is used only for this object.<sup>73</sup> In the four verses about Patroclus (who does not take the spear) in Book 16, and again in Book 19 when Achilles does take it, I note a word play on the stem *pel-*. This may be interpreted as an allusion to the name of Peleus, Achilles' father, who etymologically could be “the man of mood”,<sup>74</sup> which could refer in myth to the first human being.<sup>75</sup> In a paper published for a conference on “Arms in Antiquity” I tried to follow the route taken by this spear,<sup>76</sup> showing its supernatural, if not magical, nature and its individualised status. In this way, Achilles and his spear form a terrifying pair, which may explain why the end of the *Iliad* does not require dragons and monsters, such as Apollonius of Rhodes uses in the *Argonautica*, to draw a kind of fascination over the audience.

In *Iliad* 21, Achilles' spear plays a dramatic role in Lycaon's episode, remaining thrust into the ground and “eager to satiate with human flesh”, an astonishingly anthropomorphic expression.<sup>77</sup> Several words appear here as *hapaxes* or near *hapaxes* in Homer: the present infinitive ἄμεναι occurs only in this passage, the adjective ἀνδρομέος four times in the *Iliad*, twice in the *Odyssey*, and the association χροός ... ἀνδρομέοιο in these lines also occurs only once elsewhere (χροός ἀνδρομέοιο *Il.* 17.571). If this phrase is a formula meaning “human flesh”, let us remark that it never occurs elsewhere with a verb meaning “to eat,” even

<sup>73</sup> Wathélet 1969, Létoublon 2007, 224. For a proper name applied to a weapon, recall several well-known cases in the mythological tradition (Gungnir, Excalibur, Durandal, etc.)

<sup>74</sup> *Il.* 19.387–91 ἐκ δ' ἄρα σύριγγος πατρώϊον ἐσπάσατ' ἔγχος | βριθὺ μέγα στιβαρόν· τὸ μὲν οὐ δύνατ' ἄλλος Ἀχαιῶν | πάλλειν, ἀλλὰ μιν οἷος ἐπίστατο πῆλαι Ἀχιλλεύς· | Πηλιάδα μελίην, τὴν πατρὶ φίλω πόρε Χείρων | Πηλίου ἐκ κορυφῆς φόνον ἔμμεναι ἠρώεσσι· (the same set of four verses occurs in Book 16 in Patroclus' arming-scene, but with a negative verb: 16.140 ἔγχος δ' οὐχ ἔλετ' οἷον ἀμύμονος Αἰακίδαο (thereafter, lines 141–44 are word-for-word identical to 19.388–91).

<sup>75</sup> In the *Bible* and in the *Koran*, God creates man out of clay. See Canteins 1986.

<sup>76</sup> Létoublon 2007.

<sup>77</sup> *Il.* 21.69–70 .... ἐγχείη δ' ἄρ' ὑπὲρ νότου ἐνὶ γαίῃ | ἔσθη ἰεμένη χροός ἄμεναι ἀνδρομέοιο. Compare to 21.167–68 ... Ἥ δ' ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ | γαίῃ ἐνεστήρικτο λυλαιομένη χροός ἄσαι (where Asteropeios' spear is eager for flesh, in his fight against Achilleus).

less with this rare verb ἄμεναι, ἄσαι (respectively, present and aorist infinitive), meaning more or less “to eat one’s fill of something”, which is much stronger than the usual verbs for eating.<sup>78</sup> From this analysis, it appears that the words used for the spear appear as quasi-formulas.<sup>79</sup>

## The Chariot race

After the climax of Hector’s death in Book 22, one might be surprised to meet in Book 23 a new kind of spectacle, described with great meticulousness: that of the Games offered by Achilles in honour of Patroclus after the relatively short narration of his funeral.<sup>80</sup> The important point is, once again, that this episode deals with the verbal representation of a dramatised spectacle, with a sequence of various events intended to fascinate the audience, especially in the case of the chariot race (*Il.* 23.352–523). This includes the accident Apollo causes to befall Diomedes, the compensation granted by Athena, the loss of a chariot wheel by Eumelos and his fall, and, in particular, the treachery that allows Antilochos to get ahead of Menelaus by causing Menelaus’ chariot to suffer a collision at a very critical turning post. Once more, “real” spectators play the role of mediators between narrative and the audience:

Ἀργεῖοι δ’ ἐν ἀγῶνι καθήμενοι εἰσορόωντο  
ἵππους· τοὶ δὲ πέτοντο κονίοντες πεδίοιο. (*Il.* 23.448–49)

Now the Argives who sat in their assembly were watching  
the horses, and the horses flew through the dust of the flat land.

Though such changes of tone in the epics may be surprising for our modern minds, they perhaps correspond to a principle of alternation; if we take a unitarian stance on the *Iliad*, a kind of release of tension is now offered, for the characters as well as the audience, before the gravity of Book 24.

## Hector’s Lysis

To evoke the climactic feeling of the last book of the *Iliad*, I shall speak of a *dénouement* as if we were in a tragedy; the Greek word *lysis* used by Aristotle acquires a literal meaning in the *Iliad* (i.e. “release, freeing”) when the Trojan

<sup>78</sup> Chantraine 2009, 116–17 (s. v. ἄσαι) and *CEG*, 1274. See also Létoublon 2015.

<sup>79</sup> See also Létoublon 2014b.

<sup>80</sup> On the Chariot Race, see Clay 2007, and for a more general account on Greek athletics, Kyle 2007. On this episode of the race as a spectacle, see Myers 2011, 138–141.

king comes to Achilles' hut for the purpose of ransoming his son's corpse. The same word has already occurred in Book 1, when the priest Chryses asks for the release of his daughter Chryseis. When Aristotle chose this word to denote the solution of the crisis at the end of tragedy, opposing it to *desis*, "tie, knot", he may well have had the conclusion of the *Iliad* in mind.<sup>81</sup> This implies that the *Iliad* is constructed as a large-scale tragedy, and that tragic theatre imitated this construction for aesthetic reasons.

Dramatic authors are compelled to show characters doing things and uttering words before a more-or-less realistic decor, whereas the Homeric *aidos* puts on stage not only diverse settings, from the Achaean camp to the city of Troy with the plain in between, but also the space of the gods, Mount Olympus and sometimes Mount Ida. The poet lets us see invisible and even impossible things such as Achilles' shield, the work of the artist god Hephaistos.<sup>82</sup> Homer also suggests that after Achilles has lent his arms and horses to his friend, the Trojans believe it is Achilles himself who has come back to fight. Further, when Hector is wearing the arms he had removed from Patroclus' corpse, the suggested dramatic effect is that Achilles, with his new arms, faces an image of himself: the spectacle of another wearing his own arms increases his fury.<sup>83</sup> This is the first instance of the mirror we will meet again in the last part of our study.

## Seeing each other in a mirror

An exceptional simile in Book 24 lets the audience see how the elderly Priam is viewed by Achilles,<sup>84</sup> who is struck by a mix of admiration and stupor (θάμβος):<sup>85</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Halliwell 1998, 2002.

<sup>82</sup> Vergil will say more explicitly that such a shield made by a god is impossible to describe, *inenarrabile dictu*; cf. Létoublon 1999a. See also Purves 2010, 46–55 on Achilles' shield in the perspective of the *Eusynoptic Iliad*.

<sup>83</sup> Whitman 1965, 200–2 (Patroclus plays Achilles' role, whereas Hector, wearing the same armour, does not).

<sup>84</sup> This simile was studied by Fränkel 1921, 95–96, who probably did not find it very interesting and put it aside as a later addition ("Zu den seltsamen, und wie der Inhalt des Gedichts von allem Gewöhnlichen abweichenden Gleichnisse, die für die jüngere Epik bezeichnend sind, gehört auch das von Ω 480. Das plötzliche Auftreten des Priamos im Unterstands Achills wirkt auf die behaglich an abgegessener Tafel Sitzenden ganz gewaltig – Achilleus staunt, es staunen auch die anderen: so ist es, wenn ein rätselhafter Fremder in eines reichen Mannes Haus erscheint, ein Fremder den ἄτη πυκινὴ ergriff. Was heisst das?"). Then, to answer the question of ἄτη, Fränkel recurs to another passage (16.805) without further explanation.

<sup>85</sup> On θάμβος, linked to the aorist participle ταφών and the perfect τέθηρα, see Chantraine 2009, 405–6. –μβ– seems to have an "expressive" origin (cf. θρόμβος, στρόμβος). With these

τοὺς δ' ἔλαθ' εἰσελθὼν Πρίαμος μέγας, ἄγχι δ' ἄρα στάς  
 χερσὶν Ἀχιλλῆος λάβε γούνατα καὶ κύσε χεῖρας  
 δεινὰς ἀνδροφόνους, αἶ οἱ πολέας κτάνον υἴας.  
 ὡς δ' ὄτ' ἄν ἄνδρ' ἄτη πυκινὴ λάβῃ, ὅς τ' ἐνὶ πάτρῃ  
 φῶτα κατακτείνειας ἄλλων ἐξίκετο δῆμον  
 ἀνδρὸς ἐς ἀφνειοῦ, θάμβος δ' ἔχει εἰσορόωντας,  
 ὡς Ἀχιλεὺς θάμβησεν ἰδὼν Πρίαμον θεοειδέα  
 θάμβησαν δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι, ἐς ἀλλήλους δὲ ἴδοντο. (Il. 24.477–84)

## Tall Priam

came in unseen by the other men and stood close beside him  
 and caught the knees of Achilles in his arms, and kissed the hands  
 that were dangerous and manslaughtering and had killed so many  
 of his sons. As when dense disaster closes on one who has murdered  
 a man of his own land, and he comes to the country of others,  
 to a man of substance, and wonder seizes on those who behold him,  
 so Achilles wondered as he looked on Priam, a godlike  
 man, and the rest of them wondered also, and looked at each other.

Let us use Fränkel's method of simile analysis, remarking that the notion of θάμβος appears to be central to the simile; first met at line 480 in the image of the “fugitive homicide” (using Heiden's terms),<sup>86</sup> it is found again, twice, in the following verses (θάμβησεν, 481; θάμβησαν 482) concerning the real world. The very strong emotion of θάμβος is thus the element that links the image to reality. In addition, forms of the verb of seeing also connect the image and the real world, although in a less visible way because of the suppletive verbal system of Greek (εἰσορόωντας 481 / ἰδὼν 482, ἴδοντο 483).

After this formal remark, I will depend on Heiden's (1998) brilliant and deep synthesis of the different treatments of this simile,<sup>87</sup> an analysis explicating the simile's different aspects as “analogy, foiling, and allusion”. He critiques certain former scholars who see “dissimilarity as a functional element

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expressive sounds, the aspirated consonant and the group –μβ–, it is remarkable that the word occurs three times in three successive verses, each time linked to the idea of seeing: θάμβος ... εἰσορόωντας, θάμβησεν ἰδὼν, θάμβησαν ... ἴδοντο.

**86** Heiden 1998 has seen the significance of Fränkel's analysis but complains that he did not apply it consistently: “Fränkel perceived that an interplay of polar (absolute or extreme) opposites is a basic constituent of early Greek (especially archaic) thought and feeling ... as a consequence thought constantly operated with contrasting foils. But he scarcely applied this insight to Homeric similes, despite his extensive study of them.” See also the “Despised Migrant” in Alden 2012.

**87** See his note 1 and his rich bibliography. I call attention specifically to the beginning of Richardson's comment (1993, 323): “This must be the most dramatic moment of the *Iliad*, and its character is marked by a simile which is extremely individual”.

of the simile”, stating that “they do not explore the effects, or potential effects, of an emotional intensification achieved through the particular contrast presented by this simile alone”.<sup>88</sup> A first analogy between Priam and the fugitive “could suggest that Priam’s relative innocence makes him equally deserving of the sanctuary that a murderer might expect to receive, or even more so”.<sup>89</sup> But there is also an implicit “analogy between the fugitive murderer and the ‘murderous hands of Achilles’” (*ibid.*): “Here the abjection of a person who has killed only one man, and that in error (ἄτη πικρινή, 480), serves as a foil for the power and pride of Achilles” (*ibid.*). Heiden then mentions the role of allusion to “heroic mythology” in two aspects. First, there is a reference to Peleus as a kindly host of exiles,<sup>90</sup> since Priam portrays himself in the image of Achilles’ father, and reminds Achilles of the instructions Peleus gave Achilles at his departure. Secondly, Peleus was also known in mythology as a murderer himself.<sup>91</sup> Although this story is not told in Homer, Heiden is right to remark that the simile in the Homeric text may allude to this mythological episode and to other murders attributed to Peleus in [Apollodorus’] narrative.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, Heiden refers to Stanley’s proposal that the simile “be viewed in the context of Priam’s symbolic *katabasis*”,<sup>93</sup> which seems to me less important than the analogies, foils and allusions mentioned above.

Among the characters on stage when Priam enters Achilles’ dwelling, the murderer is, of course, Achilles, not the weak old man who suddenly appears before him. However, in the simile it is Priam who is seen (482) as a murderer, so that the real scene strongly contrasts with the imaginary one.<sup>94</sup> How could it be said in a more concise manner than this that Achilles sees himself in a mirror? That this is a fantastical vision, which Laura Slatkin calls “Tragic Visualization”? Let us however note that other persons around Achilles apparently see the same vision, since they feel the same stupor (θάμβησαν δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι). This mirroring effect is perhaps the origin of the passage’s “sublimi-

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**88** Heiden 1998, 2.

**89** Heiden 1998, 4.

**90** In the *Iliad* for Phoinix, Epeigeus and Patroclus, the latter two being homicides.

**91** Heiden 1998, 5–6 with bibliographical references; the lost epic *Alkmaionis* told how Peleus and his brother Telamon killed their half-brother Phocos and were sent into exile by their father Aiakos.

**92** Heiden 1998, 6, with reference to Slatkin 1991 for the notion of allusion.

**93** Heiden 1998, 7.

**94** As Heiden also notes, this contrast recalls the similes studied by Porter 1972, with more complexity.



ty”:<sup>95</sup> Priam sees Achilles both as a murderer and as an image of himself, a poor old man grieving for his son and seeking assistance, and Achilles views Priam both as a fugitive homicide and as an image of himself in reference to his own father.<sup>96</sup> The density of the simile and its multiple meanings, as Heiden remarks,<sup>97</sup> are made possible only through a detour by way of a multi-layered image. A somewhat similar effect is found in the pursuit and flight simile of *Iliad* 22, which unwinds in two successive stages, first as an animal comparison showing a fawn flying before a dog (*Il.* 22.189–93), then as a nightmare where the flyer cannot escape the pursuer, but nor can the latter reach the former (*Il.* 22.199–201):<sup>98</sup>

ὥς δ' ἐν ὄνειρῳ οὐ δύναται φεύγοντα διώκειν  
οὔτ' ἄρ' ὁ τὸν δύναται ὑποφεύγειν οὔθ' ὁ διώκειν  
ὥς ὁ τὸν οὐ δύνατο μάρψαι ποσίν, οὔδ' ὃς ἀλύξαι. (*Il.* 22.199–201)

As in a dream a man is not able to follow one who runs  
from him, nor can the runner escape, nor the other pursue him,  
so he could not run him down in his speed, nor the other get clear.

Both similes seek to describe complex psychological phenomena. The comparison of the flight arises from Hector being unable to distance himself from Achilles, but at the same time it also shows that Achilles is likewise not able

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**95** [Longinus] quotes another Homeric simile, describing a tempest, rather than this one: “And far as a man with his eyes through the sea-line haze may discern, | on a cliff as he sits and gazes away over the wine-dark deep, | so far at a bound do the loud-neighing steeds of the Deathless leap.” (*Iliad* 5. 770, trans. A. S. Way [adapted]). [Longinus] comments on the quality of a spectacle seen only in the imagination: “He makes the vastness of the world the measure of their leap. The sublimity is so overpowering as naturally to prompt the exclamation that if the divine steeds were to leap thus twice in succession they would pass beyond the confines of the world”. See the thematic markers of the sublime in Porter 2016, 51–54, and the great ocean, *ibid.*, 360.

**96** Alden 2012 studies this passage as an example of the theme of the “Despised Migrant”.

**97** “It is hardly to be imagined that these associations could have been accurately recognized, much less interpreted, on a single hearing. Indeed, less acute listeners might not even have been troubled by the simile, while the more acute would have registered different disturbing subtleties and pondered them differently. Discussion here, therefore, does not aim at reproducing a single ideal reading of the passage, or at imputing to the poet techniques for eliciting such a reading. Instead it exposes a range of provocations which the simile offers to its audiences and suggests a range of interpretive responses.” (Heiden 1998, 2)

**98** On the whole passage, see the excellent commentary by Richardson 1993, 127. In his famous *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Dodds quotes this passage as an example of anxiety-dream: “The poet does not ascribe such nightmares to his heroes, but he knows well what they are like, and makes brilliant use of the experience to express frustration.” (Dodds 2004, 106).

to reach Hector. If it is a dream (ἐν ὄνειρῳ), one cannot know if the poet means that the dream is appearing in Hector's mind alone or in those of both warriors, a confusion which highly dramatises the situation, making the pursuit indefinite.<sup>99</sup>

To return to Book 24, the major points are that Homer depicts the terrified surprise of the characters seeing each other through a simile of the imaginary sighting of a fugitive homicide, and that Achilles' vision of Priam finds a strong echo in Priam's vision of Achilles. The common point between both comparisons is precisely that through the device of the simile, the poet may describe a mental process without defining the individual whom it specifically concerns. Both similes stand at the highest points of the Iliadic dramatised narrative. Each of them makes us visualise a spectacle that arises in the poet's mind. He lets us see the world that his characters inhabit as the general backdrop of his theatre, and in some purple passages, especially by means of a simile, he gives us access to another kind of reality, the very mind, or, if Snell's ideas do not allow us to use this word, the interiority of the characters, their mental world. We do not actually enter Achilles', Hector's and Priam's minds, but the similes give us an analogic image of them.

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<sup>99</sup> See also the excellent analysis of this simile by Purves 2010, 55–59, esp. 57: "In such a context, the speed of the racers becomes irrelevant, for the two never change their place in relation to one another. The runners, like the scene, are stuck in time. The movement of one cancels out the movement of the other, an effect that is also played out in the structure of the lines through the doubling and redoubling of negatives. As with the ekphrastic scene, the synoptic view of the two warriors circling the walls of Troy, especially when it is telescoped out into the vision of figures whirling around in a circle, is marked by the idea of stillness and the deferment of an endpoint."

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