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Beyond the Generation of Leaves:
The Imagery of Trees and Human Life in Homer

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Classics

by

Charles David Stein

2013

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Beyond the Generation of Leaves:
The Imagery of Trees and Human Life in Homer

by

Charles David Stein

Doctor of Philosophy in Classics

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Alex C. Purves, Chair

Homer regularly connects the life cycle of trees with the life and death of human beings to bring vividly before his audience the strength and endurance of his characters and the fragility and transience of the human condition. My work builds on previous studies of tree imagery in Homeric similes but focuses specifically on the relationship between tree imagery in speech and narrative tree similes. I argue that Homeric characters use tree imagery in ways that mirror and manipulate common Homeric themes expressed by the narrator.

In the introductory chapter, I discuss the provenance of the metaphor linking plants and humans and discuss the poet's relationship to the narrator and characters. Each of the following chapters, then, presents the close reading of a speech that features a tree image, explicates the rhetorical impact of that image in its immediate context, and finally compares that reading with the way the narrator uses similar images. In Chapter 2, I read Achilles' oath on the scepter (*Il.*

1.234-9) against the tree-similes of the *Iliad*'s battle narrative. Chapter 3 compares Glaucus' simile of the leaves (*Il.* 6.146-9) with the other leaf imagery in the Homeric corpus. Chapter 4 connects Odysseus' recollection of the sacred palm on Delos (*Od.* 6.160-9) with plant imagery in epithalamic poetry and with other mentions of shoots and saplings in Homer. Chapter 5 shows how Odysseus' description of his rooted bedpost (*Od.* 23.183-204) draws on the narrator's descriptions of rooted trees and of carpentry in the corpus to buttress his claims of his identity as husband of Penelope and rightful king of Ithaca.

Each chapter, therefore, reveals how the characters subtly manipulate details of their plant descriptions, how each follows or departs from norms established by the narrator, and, ultimately, how trees, leaves, shoots, and roots each carry their own distinct symbolic meanings. What results, then, is a nuanced account of tree imagery in Homer that illustrates its considerable range and shows how it is capable of representing the full scope of heroic strength and vulnerability.

The dissertation of Charles David Stein is approved.

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2013

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The similes depicting trees and plants stick in the memory of even a first-time reader of the *Iliad*. The poplar to which the Trojan Simoesius is compared when he falls at the hands of Telemonian Ajax (*Il.* 4.473-489),¹ the drooping poppy which the poet links to the prince Gorgythion (*Il.* 8.300-308), Glaucus' statement that generations of men are like generations of leaves (*Il.* 6.146-9)—all are iconic signals of the poem's central theme: how war compels mortal heroes to strive for immortal fame by dying themselves. The pathos bound up with this imagery is undeniably a major source of its compelling interest to the audiences of the poem, ancient and modern.² Still, as emotionally gripping as we find the deaths of minor warriors to be, the poet

¹ Schein (1984: 72-76) sees the death of Simoesius as emblematic of the cost of the Trojan War, particularly to the Trojans, noting specifically that the "botanical" language including Simoesius' father's name Anthemion and the victim's epithet *θαλερόν* "blooming" (*Il.* 4.474) suggest the dead youth's wasted potential: "We get an idea of a youth both blooming and potentially a husband, of warmth and energy that might have been directed toward a peaceful fruitful life but were instead turned to war, where death put an end to warmth, flowering, and potential" (74).

² The leading study of pathos in Homer is Griffin (1980). The connection between trees and pathos, in Vergil, is sensitively explored by Thomas (1988). In Thomas' view, scenes of tree-felling in the *Aeneid* express ambivalence about Aeneas' colonization and subjugation of Italy by eliciting sympathy from the audience for conquered people. It is still an open question whether we can find definitive evidence that Homer condemns tree-felling in and of itself. While Thomas focuses on the destruction of *sacred* trees and groves in the *Iliad* to build his case, trees that fall in Homer are not sacred, and the Homeric similes of tree-felling usually include a sequel that the wood from the fallen tree will be used to fashion an object of lasting cultural value. Reckford (1974: 64) rightly highlights this difference between Homer and Vergil. The pathos in Homer comes instead from his unflinching description of the grief of parents separated from their children. This motif is first sounded in the obituary passages. For example, at 5.155-158, after Xanthus and Thoon die at Troy, they cannot inherit their father Phaenops' estate, leaving for him only *γόον* "lament" and *κῆδεα λυγρά* "painful cares" (*Il.* 5.156). Homer weds the theme of parent/child separation to the destruction of trees, especially in the simile accompanying the death of Euphorbus (*Il.* 17.53-60) in which a sudden storm uproots an olive tree that had been scrupulously tended by its gardener (54), the way a father cares for his son. On the link in Homer between fathers and gardeners, see Henderson (1997) and Pucci (1996). The motif culminates in Book 24 when Priam and Achilles weep together over Peleus, Patroclus, and Hector (*Il.* 24.507-512). See also the perceptive survey of tree imagery in Greek laments ancient and modern in Alexiou (2002 [1974]: 198-201).

connects the life cycle of trees and the growth, flourishing, and death of heroes not only to contrast the finality of human mortality with the permanence of nature, but also to praise the awesome strength and endurance characteristic of warriors qualitatively better than the mortals of the poet's own time. A close look at the symbolic resonance of this imagery is especially warranted because of its versatility.³

To capture the expressive flexibility of this imagery in Homer, I shall show in this work from one chapter to the next how the different aspects of the tree (the full-grown plant, the leaves, shoots, and roots) all carry distinct symbolic meanings that imply a range of themes touching on the human condition. For example, roots embody the strength and stability of social institutions. By contrast, shoots and saplings, because they are particularly vulnerable to the ravages of nature, show that the cherished bond between parents and children is perpetually under threat in Homer. Fragile leaves express the futility of heroic accomplishment in the face of death, while full-grown trees embody the strength and endurance of formidable champions.

Yet tree imagery in Homer is subtler still. Within each chapter, I shall show how any single aspect of the tree possesses different symbolic meanings depending on whether the narrator deploys tree imagery in the main narrative or a character uses the imagery in a speech. I shall show how the poet lets the narrator and characters use this imagery for different purposes. To be specific, we may note one general trend at the outset: the narrator tends to extol his subjects, so his imagery, including his imagery of trees and plants, is designed for praise while

³ Studies of this imagery in Homer have been undertaken by scholars of similes, chief among them Fränkel (1977 [1921]): 35-41, Redfield (1994 [1975]): 186-189, and Scott (1974; 2009). I shall build on this work by focusing specifically on relationships within the text between tree similes in speech and tree similes in the narrative. Character use of similes for rhetorical advantage have been recently studied by Ready (2011) and he makes interesting observations in his fifth chapter about how character similes can pick up the narrator's similes (150-210). In this chapter, Ready studies pairs of similes in close proximity to each other while I am interested here to study how a speaker's simile draws on themes found in similes across the Homeric corpus.

the characters draw on the connection between trees and human beings to criticize each other. Such a difference of motive between the narrator and the characters suggests the narrator and the characters each hold and express their own perspectives on the poems' events independent of each other.⁴ We will explain in detail the relationship between the Homeric narrator and the characters below in this introduction. That discussion will ground my claim that the characters can either follow or deviate from the narrator in their use of tree imagery.

In this work, then, I shall compare how Homeric speakers use tree imagery with how the narrator uses it. Each of the following four chapters focuses on a tree image in a given speech, explicates the rhetorical impact of that image in its immediate context, then compares that reading with the force similar images tend to have in the rest of the Homeric corpus. Such comparison reveals the flexibility of the range of uses to which tree imagery can be put. I show in detail over the course of the analysis how the characters subtly manipulate the details of their images, now following now departing from patterns established by the narrator.

Generally speaking, Homer's characters regularly connect their problems to the rhythms of nature. For example, during the embassy scene, in which Achilles jousts rhetorically against Agamemnon's messenger, Odysseus, the hero compares himself to a self-sacrificing mother bird struggling to protect its offspring (*Il.* 9.323-327) in order to support his claim that cowards and heroes earn the same rewards in battle. Further, when Achilles battles Hector one-on-one, after Hector begs Achilles to return his corpse to Priam, Achilles refuses by appealing to the hunting habits of predator and prey, to the law of nature red in tooth and claw (*Il.* 22.262-267). Even Paris scores a point quarreling with Hector by comparing Hector's heart to an axe-blade chopping through trees (*Il.* 3.60-62). With each of these comparisons, the speakers situate

⁴ I share Ready's (2011: 150-157) view that the poet pits similes in speech against the narrator's similes.

human behavior in the world of nature by comparing humans with the plant or animal worlds in order to advance their case. The imagery of Homer's speeches should be understood, therefore, as a weapon in a speaker's rhetorical arsenal.

Going further, I am arguing that when the characters use this imagery, they are attempting to win a greater share of narrative authority for themselves to gain advantage in the arguments they have with one another. We cannot say that the characters do this self-consciously, of course. Because they are not rigorously trained bards, the characters cannot be aware that the narrator of an epic conventionally uses tree similes when he sings of battle. Rather, the poet deliberately inserts tree imagery into the direct speech of characters, makes the characters speak like the narrator, collapses distinctions between narrative and direct speech, and thereby invests these charged moments with authority which he usually reserves for the narrator himself.

By saying this I am building on a commonly held view that similes and imagery make the direct speech of characters more poetic. Scholars such as Martin (1989), for example, following Moulton (1977: 100) and Friedrich and Redfield (1978: 277), have argued that the presence of similes in Achilles' speech makes him a character with the poetic insight of a bard.⁵ Pelliccia (2002), on the other hand, has argued that we should distinguish the comparisons characters make in direct speech from the similes used by the narrator because they serve different rhetorical purposes. Pelliccia describes the typical narrative simile as adverbial, in that the narrator uses a simile to make the action of the battle narrative more vivid,⁶ while a character

⁵ These scholars equate the poet with the narrator. Similes and imagery make characters look not like the poet, but like the narrator.

⁶ According to Pelliccia, the narrative simile "fills out, as a modifier, our picture of an action in the story. As an adverb, such a comparative clause is not formally an assertion: even if we

makes a comparison to strengthen his argument. Because these comparisons have such different purposes, Pelliccia argues that we should not even call the comparisons a character uses “similes.”

I agree with Pelliccia in that similes are more characteristic of the main narrative than direct speech, and I am convinced that characters can use likenesses to articulate complex arguments, of which Pelliccia’s close reading of Glaucus’ leaf likeness is a good example (this passage is the focus of my third chapter). I would not go as far as Pelliccia, to claim that the comparisons characters make should be distinguished so absolutely from narrative similes, because they have imagery in common and are therefore linked. Furthermore, I also see that narrative similes contribute to a program of praise: for example, as we will show below in Chapter 2, the narrator uses tree similes in the battle narrative to praise the strength and endurance of Achaean warriors by making vivid their triumphs over formidable Trojan adversaries. So as we will see, this imagery is always used for rhetorical effect, whether by the narrator or by the characters. It will be our task to bring out how the narrator and character each draw from this common fund of imagery for their own purposes.

In this introduction, then, we shall set ourselves two chief goals. First, through a brief survey of Greek archaic poetry focused on the Homeric corpus, we will define the basic contours of the metaphor linking plants and human beings. This survey will bring out how, precisely, Homer maps the life and death of human beings onto the life cycle of trees and plants. With that map we will be better able to see how this schema informs Homer’s complex perspective on the place of human beings in the universe: creatures vulnerable, but nevertheless capable of great

might feel that there is an *implication* that ‘Achilles is like a lion,’ the form of the simile does not state the matter thus; it simply says that *as* a lion leaps, *so* Achilles leapt. In short, the primary aim of the simile does not seem to be to assert what Achilles is like, but to bring his leaping more vividly to the eye” (199; Pelliccia’s italics).

feats of strength and endurance. After the survey, we shall undertake the second task—to clarify the relationship between the poet, the narrator, and the characters in Homer. We shall deal in turn with two critical questions: 1) What precisely is the relationship in Homer between the poet, the narrator, and the characters? 2) How does a character’s use of imagery connect him or her to the narrator? And further, is it proper to speak of a speaker’s image as “modeled on” or “derived from” an image in the narrative? Addressing these questions will lay the theoretical foundation that will enable us to make our main argument: that Homeric characters use tree imagery in ways that mirror and manipulate stock Homeric themes to achieve striking rhetorical effects.

THE FINEST THING THE CHIAN SAID

ἔν δὲ τὸ κάλλιστον Χίος ἔειπεν ἀνὴρ·
 «οἷη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν»
 παῦροί μιν θνητῶν οὐασι δεξάμενοι
 στέρνοις ἐγκατέθεντο· πάρεστι γὰρ ἐλπίς ἐκάστω
 ἀνδρῶν ἢ τε νέων στήθεσιν ἐμφύεται. (Simonides fr. 19W²)

The one finest thing the Chian man said:
 “As is the generation of leaves, so, too is the generation of men.”
 Few mortals, although they receive it with their ears
 Put it in their hearts; for each man has hope
 which grows in the chests of young men.

The connection between trees and human beings is ubiquitous in Greek literature—indeed, as a cultural universal, the connection undoubtedly arose in human thought before the rise of Greek culture—and certainly it was bequeathed to Latin literature.⁷ It is not our purpose here to give an exhaustive survey of the instantiations of the metaphor in Greek literature because it would be tedious. It is better to begin by mapping the contours of the metaphor connecting plants with people in Homer and archaic Greek lyric poetry because it establishes a

⁷ On the connection between plants and human beings in Roman literature, see most recently Gowers (2005 and 2011) with bibliographies.

baseline against which we will be better able to observe how the characters “spin” tree imagery to suit their rhetorical purposes. Detailed proof of the centrality of this imagery in Greek and Roman thought need not be belabored, nevertheless it is worth noting here as well the importance of the men-as leaves likeness for the reconstruction of archaic Greek literary history.⁸ We shall therefore illustrate that development by looking closely at Simonides fr. 19 W² because Simonides engages directly with our Homeric text when he offers a direct quote of *Il.* 6.146. His direct quote testifies not only to the importance of the men-as-leaves motif but also makes him the first poet—so far as we can tell—to engage with the *Iliad* that has come down to us (as opposed to earlier poets who may only be engaging with plant imagery or heroic themes in general).⁹

We can be sure that comparisons between the life and death of human beings and the growth, flourishing, and death of plants have a long history in human thought.¹⁰ So, too, in

⁸ The men-as-leaves likeness has particularly attracted scholarly attention. Morpurgo (1927) and Sider (2001) have surveyed the motif across Greek and Roman literature. Griffith (1975), Fowler (1987: 1-53), and Garner (1990: 8-21) study the motif as a way to describe the relationship between epic and lyric. See further, Ch. 3 below.

⁹ Rutherford (2001: 50), Obbink (2001: 82-83), and Sider (2001: 285) suggest that the fragment belongs to the Plataea elegy. If so, then its likely date falls close after the Battle of Plataea (479 BCE). If it belongs to a separate poem, and was written by Simonides, the poet was born in either 556 or 532 BCE and died at 90 (Parsons, 2001: 56). It is also possible, though to my mind highly unlikely, since it is transmitted with genuine Simonides, that the leaves poem was actually written by Semonides of Amorgos in the early sixth century. Hubbard (2001) advances the possibility that the leaf-poem by Semonides was taken to be by Simonides of Ceos and put into the Simonides book that has come down to us.

¹⁰ Scholars of various stripes have noted this. We may register the thesis of Lakoff and Turner (1989: 12-14) that PEOPLE ARE PLANTS is an example of a basic, conventional, and pervasive metaphor that structures all human thought across every time and culture. Similarly universal, the monumental work of J.G. Frazer (1906-1915) argues that in the earliest stage of human religion, trees were thought to contain a numinous power that promoted fertility and that primeval kings shared in this numinous power. According to Frazer’s theory the onset of old age and physical deterioration in the king were outward signs that the power of fertility was ebbing

Greece was the connection vital to many modes of thought and to literature of every genre.¹¹

The connection must even predate the Greeks. The presence of warrior-as-tree metaphors across the literatures of different Indo-European languages leads scholars to believe that these metaphors belonged to Proto Indo-European poetry.¹² One such stock metaphor conceived of the warrior as a tree and served to emphasize the strength and endurance of a victorious warrior.¹³ Interestingly, however, there is only one reflex of this use of the metaphor in the *Iliad* (12.127-136). As we shall demonstrate in Chapter 2, in the *Iliad*, the Homeric narrator tends rather to compare dying warriors (regularly Trojans) to falling trees. This regularly recurring metaphor serves to glorify the victorious army (regularly the Achaeans) by acknowledging the formidable, but still surmountable, strength of their opponents.¹⁴

away from him. In order to preserve the power of fertility at its full strength, ancient peoples would sacrifice their kings on a yearly basis (or even more often than this) in order that their crops would continue growing. Frazer theorized that a bewildering array of yearly fertility rituals observable in societies the world over (including most notably May Day in the popular festivals of Europe) were survivals of this primitive belief system.

¹¹ Among literary surveys Segal (1963) treats the theme in poetry from Homer to the Hellenistic period. Fränkel (1946) treats the theme in archaic Greek poetry. More catalogic are the articles of Forster (1936; 1952). Steiner (1986: 28-39) surveys how Pindar uses plant imagery to extol and admonish his patrons. On how plant imagery informs Homer's conception of heroism, see Nagy (1999 [1979]: 175-189), and chs. 2 and 3 below. The connection also finds an important place in pre-Socratic and later philosophy: strikingly Empedocles dubs the human ear a *σάρκινον ὄζον* "fleshy shoot" (A86/B99) in need of the attention of a devoted gardener (that is, a good teacher) and in the *Nichomachean Ethics* Aristotle famously describes training to hit the mean of virtue as the straightening of a bent wooden stick (1109b). On the ethical issue of *hybris* in plants, see the interesting article of Michelini (1978).

¹² West (2007: 494-495) offers a recent survey of this imagery in battle narrative.

¹³ Campanile (1977: 119-120).

¹⁴ One particularly close Sanskrit parallel appears at RV 1.130.4 where Indra strikes his enemies the way a carpenter strikes trees with axes. On this and other similar images see Durante (1976: 121), West (1988: 154), Watkins (1995: 461 n. 4), and West (2007: 495).

In order to ascertain the scope of the metaphor linking human beings and plants, we will here create a portrait of the human being as plant, so to speak. We will set out the basic parallels between people and plants that emerge from a survey of Homer, Hesiod, and lyric poetry. It is important, as we construct this portrait, not to confine ourselves to any one author or text because every poet who draws on this metaphor adapts it to better fulfill his own poetic project.¹⁵ Were we to begin with the *Iliad* and move forward, for example, our initial picture would be distorted because that poem focuses on the representation of young male warriors battling and dying. In other words, the plot of any given poem shapes the ways in which the poet uses the metaphor.

The poets invoke this metaphor by describing the human body, in whole or in part, or the human life cycle, in the same language as they use for describing trees, leaves, or flowers. Sometimes the poets make direct comparisons between the human and vegetal realms while at other times the links more indirect, as when Homer uses adjectives like θαλερός “flourishing,”¹⁶ from θάλλω “to blossom,”¹⁷ to describe the human voice or human tears, or τέρην “swelling” to describe human skin. The use of such adjectives, too, is a reflex of the same poetical habit, though the degree to which we feel the connection between the human and plant body necessarily varies from passage to passage. In general this language conveys the exquisite

¹⁵ On the ways in which the differing outlooks of Homer and Hesiod on life and death affected their use of tree imagery in the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Theogony*, see the opening of Ch. 4 below (pp. 117-118).

¹⁶ Cf. LfGE θαλερος s.v. B1 “von (menschl.) Körperfunktionen: *lebendig (hervor)quellend* (Träne, Stimme, Schluchzen). τέρην “glatt > zart” has a similar semantic range, describing the fullness of human tears and skin (LfGE B1: “von menschl. (Th. 5 göttl.) Körper(oberfläche)” and the delicacy of leaves and flowers (B2)

¹⁷ θάλλω is used of flourishing vines on Ogygia at *Od.* 5.69, of a fig tree thick with leaves at *Od.* 12.103 and of the Phaeacian orchard in the grove of Athena at *Od.* 6.293. Cf. LfGE s.v. B3 “von Vegetation (vgl. θαλλός, θήλεω, τηλεθάω): *geihen, prangen* (mit Blättern, Blüten, Trauben).”

beauty and perfect health of the ideal body and signals the weakness and vulnerability of human beings. When the poets employ diction associated with plants for the human life cycle, they express above all the transience of human life.

Homer makes a basic connection between plants and human beings by defining mortals as those who eat the grain of the earth (6.142; 13.322; 21.465) in opposition to the gods who live forever.¹⁸ In the Catalogue of Ships the autochthonous Athenians are said to grow from the soil of Attica (τέκε δὲ ξείδωρος ἄρουρα, *Il.* 2.548). Hesiod explains that Zeus made the Race of Bronze from ash trees (*Works and Days*, 146), to signal their great strength. When the Achaeans go to assembly, they are likened to bees whose swarm Homer imagines as grape clusters (βοτρυδόν, *Il.* 2.89), expressing their cohesiveness (Latacz, 2010: 35 *ad loc*) and perhaps their energy as well. Similarly, the anxious assembly about to stampede to the ships is compared to wheat ruffled by the wind (2.147-149).¹⁹ In the *Odyssey* Odysseus compares Nausicaa to a palm tree: φοίνικος νέον ἔρνος ἀνερχόμενον ἐνόησα (“I saw a fresh palm sapling shooting up [on Delos],” 6.163), praising through his imagery Nausicaa’s gracefulness and independence.²⁰ Thetis, using a similar image in quite a different context (a preemptory lament), compares Achilles to a shoot: ὃ δ’ ἀνέδραμεν ἔρνεϊ ἴσος (18.56, 437). Hecuba in the same situation calls

¹⁸ See Ch. 3 below for discussion of this theme in Glaucus and Diomedes’ interchange at *Il.* 6.119-236.

¹⁹ Homer conveys mental disturbance with a similar image at *Il.* 23.597-600 when he describes how Menelaus’s anger melts away just as dew waters a wheatfield after Antilochus resolves their quarrel over the chariot race.

²⁰ On this passage, see Ch. 4 below.

Hector her φίλον θάλος “dear shoot” (22.87).²¹ Taken together, all these passages show that depending on the context, the comparisons between plants and human beings are made to show the strength and grace of human beings, but also to bring out their fragility and vulnerability: heartsick Sappho, for example, calls herself “greener than grass” (χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας / ἔμμι, 31.14-15); on the next line she declares that she is near death (31.16).

The poets describe parts of the human body, like the thighs, hands, or the voice, with the language of plants. In the *Works and Days* (741-742) Hesiod advises not to cut fingernails at a feast, creating a rather bold metaphor: μηδ’ ἀπὸ πεντόζοιο θεῶν ἐν δαιτὶ θαλείῃ / αὔδον ἀπὸ χλωροῦ τάμνειν αἴθωνι κιθήρῳ “Do not cut the dry from the green five-branch [the hand] with shining iron at an abundant feast of the gods.” θαλερός, describes Ares’ thighs at *Il.* 15.113 and a voice choked with emotion (*Il.* 17.696, 23.397, *Od.* 4.705, 19.472).²²

Plant vocabulary also regularly expresses the fragility and vulnerability of the human body. λειριόεις “lily-white, lily-like” connotes grace (Hesiod describes the sweet voice of the Muses with the adjective at *Th.* 41) but also weakness. Hector taunts Ajax by calling his skin “lily-white” (χρόα λειριόεντα, *Il.* 13.830).²³ The feeble Trojan elders also have a lily-like voice (*Il.* 3.152).²⁴ The lock of hair Achilles cuts for Patroclus’ pyre is flourishing (χαίτην / τήν ...

²¹ Similarly, in the *Iliad*, Hector is Andromache’s θαλερὸς παρακοίτης “flourishing husband” (6.430; 8.190); so too, Helen is Paris’ flourishing wife (θαλερὴν παράκοιτιν, 3.53), indicating the acme of mortal beauty.

²² θαλερός similarly describes the fullness, abundance, or roundness of tears at *Il.* 2.266, 6.496, 24.9, 24.794, and *Od.* 4.556, 10.201, 10.409, 10.570, 11.5, 11.391, 11.466, 12.12, 16.16, 22.447, and of lamentation (γόος) at *Od.* 10.457. On the connection of θάλος to grief, see further, Ch. 4. So, too, does τερὴν, of similar meaning, describe tears at *Il.* 3.142, 16.11, 19.323; *Od.* 16.332.

²³ Cf. Stanford (1969: 5): “λειριόεντα makes good sense [in this passage] if taken to mean both visually white and tactually tender.”

²⁴ Stanford (1969) concludes that λειριόεις may be taken in a positive sense. He believes Homer makes a synaesthetic likeness between the pleasing visual shape and color of the lily and the

τηλεθόωσαν, 23.141-142). The adjective conveys both Achilles' beauty and signals his and Patroclus' vulnerability. A dead warrior's eye is impaled on a sword point like a poppy (φῆ κώδειαν, 14.499), conveying helplessness and defeat. More indirectly, the adjective τέρην "swelling" describes leaves at *Il.* 13.180 and *Od.* 12.357 and grass blossoms at *Od.* 9.449, but also describes human flesh under threat of being pierced by weapons at 13.553, and 14.406 or vultures at *Il.* 4.237. Nor is the metaphor by any means restricted to the male heroes of the *Iliad*. In the New Archilochus (196A West) the iambic poet puts his characteristic salacious spin on this metaphor. Neoboule's sister calls Neoboule a "beautiful tender girl" (καλὴ τέρεια παρθένος, 4), picking up such Homeric phrases as θαλαρῆν παράκοιτιν ("flourishing wife," *Il.* 3.53), Hector's label for Helen. Archilochus goes on to tell Neoboule's sister that he will stop at ποη[φόρους / κ]ήπους "grass-bearing gardens" (apparently a reference to her pubic hair) (15-16).

The human life cycle is also conceived as similar to the vegetal cycle of immaturity, maturity, and decay. The *Iliad* illustrates the life cycle in all three phases with reference to the noun ἥβη "youthful prime of life" and verb ἡβάω "to flourish at the youthful prime of life." Homer presents characters at each stage and conceives of ἥβη as the middle stage of a person's journey through life. Astyanax, still a baby, has not reached his ἥβη, and, Andromache laments, will never reach it οὐδέ μιν οἶω / ἡβην ἵξεσθαι (24.727-728). Homer makes the connection between the prime of human life and plant life directly at 13.284, when the Achaean Idomeneus says about Aeneas: καὶ δ' ἔχει ἥβης ἄνθος, ὃ τε κράτος ἐστὶ μέγιστον ("he has the flower of youth, which is the greatest strength"). Iphidamas similarly reaches "the measure of his very-glorious prime of life" (ἥβης ἐρικυδέος ἵκετο μέτρον, 11.225). In the middle stage, mortals are

"firm and unbroken note of the cicada, sustained, unvarying, and free from any disrupting ἀλλότριος ἦχος" (8).

depicted attempting, but not succeeding at, great feats of strength (12.381-385; 23.685-687; 5.550-553²⁵; 23.431-433). The adjective *θαλερός* similarly modifies young men in their prime, hunting (*Il.* 3.23-28; 11.414-420; 17.281-285), fighting (14.4), and wearing the *kataipux*, a kind of helmet (10.259). Hermes appears to Priam to guide him to Achilles' tent as a prince at just this stage of life (24.347-348). In the last stage is Nestor, who constantly reminds whoever will listen that he once possessed the bloom of youth (*Il.* 8.132-134; 8.157-158; 11.670-672; 23.629-631).²⁶ Nestor indicates that old age grows on him like bark that only a god could prune (8.444-446). The warrior's death, even for one in his prime, is explicitly an "end" (*τέλος θανάτοιο*, 16.855, 22.321). Once the warrior dies, he laments his prime (16.857; 22.363) because he can no longer enjoy it (17.24-25). In the New Archilochus, the poet disparages Neoboule for being past her prime (*ἥβης δὲ μέτρ' ἔφηνε μαινόλις γυνή*, "the mad woman has shown forth the limit of her prime of life," 20) and for being "overripe" (*πέπειρα*, 17) and for having lost the flower of her virginity (*ἄνθος δ' ἀπερρύηκε παρθενήϊον*, 18).²⁷

To reiterate, treatments of the imagery of trees and human life tend to stress that the poet uses this imagery to express the vulnerability of human beings to the ravages of nature and to depict the fleeting transience of human life. These themes are critically important, yet the

²⁵ Here Crethon and Orsilocheus set off for Troy but they die there at the hands of Aeneas.

²⁶ Cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 79-81 where the chorus describes old age walking on three legs when leaves have withered (*τό θ' ὑπέργνηρων φυλλάδος ἤδη / κατακαρφομένης τρίποδας μὲν ὁδοὺς / στείχει*).

²⁷ Merkelbach and West (1974) cite as parallels Anacreon 432 PMG (*κνυζή τις ἤδη καὶ πέπειρα γίνομαι / σὴν διὰ μαργοσύνην* "I [female speaker] am becoming itchy and overripe because of your lust.") and Theocritus 7.120-121 (*καὶ δὴ μὰν ἀπίοιο πεπαίτερος, αἱ δὲ γυναῖκες, / 'αἰαῖ', φαντί, 'Φιλῖνε, τό τοι καλὸν ἄνθος ἀπορρεῖ*. "And indeed he is riper than a pear [Philius, the *eromenos*], and the women say "alas, Philinus, your lovely bloom decays away." Henrichs (1980) argues for a sophisticated allusion between *Idyll* 7 and the Cologne Epode and includes detailed discussion of the metaphor linking promiscuous women to overripe fruit and the transposition of the ripeness metaphor from a woman to a male (20-23).

strength that the tree embodies is equally important. The hardness of Homer's trees has been less commented upon, yet the fusion of vulnerability with strength makes the tree a fitting symbol of the quandary of heroism.

I conclude this survey by singling out Simonides fr. 19W² for special consideration because this poet quotes the *Iliad* text directly (verse 2 = *Il.* 6.146). This technique of explicit quotation leaves no room for doubt about the importance of our *Iliad* to Simonides (as opposed to merely the men-as-leaves trope).²⁸ Although Simonides is not the only poet, or even the first poet to pick up Homer's famous image,²⁹ his words here are still highly suggestive of the power and influence the *Iliad* carried in the fifth century BCE and show forcefully how later poets came to invoke Homer by employing the men-as-leaves trope themselves. Simonides shows how the men-as-leaves likeness becomes a symbol not only of a human being but also for the epic tradition. Simonides conceives of Homer as a mentor because he draws inspiration for the Plataea elegy not simply from the Muse herself, but from Homer's Muse.³⁰ He explicitly seeks

²⁸ Cf. Bowie (2010: 78): "For Simonides, in this elegy at least, Homer's *Iliad* has become what it was for so many later Greeks, a quarry for γνῶμαι."

²⁹ Mimnermus fr. 2 W precedes Simonides by at least a century (Mimnermus fl. 632-629 BCE, Test. 1 Allen; Simonides lived from 556-467 BC). Scholars differ in how they characterize the relationship between *Il.* 6.146-9 and Mimnermus 2 since Mimnermus may only be creating his poem out of typical poetic imagery and themes accessible to any poet. Allen (1993: 41) is disinclined to call the relationship allusive, and surveys recent scholarship on both sides of the issue. For a recent survey of the men-as-leaves trope from Homer to Vergil, see Sider (2001).

³⁰ Simonides' relationship to Homer was doubtless critical for 19-20W² since the poet's name appears at 20W².14, but because of the fragmentary state of our text at the vital lines, we cannot tell exactly what Simonides had in mind. Sider prints φράζο δὲ παλαιά / ... γλώσσης ἔκφυγ' Ὀμηρ[(13-14) and translates "Consider [the account of the man of] old. Homer escaped [(men's) forgetting his words]." If Sider has the sense correct, then Simonides is here contrasting the brief flourishing of human life with the endurance of Homer and his text. Simonides speaks in the Plataea elegy as well of the poet Homer being inspired by the Muses (11W .15-16) and hopes the Muse will attend his efforts in his own time, too. Rutherford (2001) and Obbink (2001) float the possibility that 19-20 W² are part of a coda to the Plataea elegy,

to emulate Homer when he contrasts how Homer's poetry shed κλέος upon the heroes of old (11W².15) with his own hope that he can bestow a similarly undying fame upon the heroes of Plataea (ἀθάνατον κλέος, 11W².28). By contrast, when Homer or Hesiod invoke the Muses to inspire their song, they make no mention whatsoever of human poets as sources of inspiration.

Particularly important for us here are ἔν and κάλλιστον because these words show that Simonides makes a judgment about the worth of the Homeric corpus and selects a single verse to save and on which to elaborate. The aged wise Simonides appreciates the worth of *Il.* 6.146, and he contrasts the wisdom of age with the judgment of the young, who are disinclined by nature to take this message to heart.³¹ Simonides paints a vivid picture of hearing (οὔασι δεξάμενοι, 3, perhaps in performance?) but not listening to Homer (στέρνοις ἐγκατέθεντο, 4, with a contrasting bodily metaphor). Line 5 ἀνδρῶν ἥ τε νέων στήθεσιν ἐμφύεται also echoes the first half of ὥς ἀνδρῶν γενεῇ ἥ μὲν φύει, ἥ δ' ἀπολήγει (*Il.* 1.149). While Homer contrasts one generation with another, one growing, one dying, Simonides uses the same language and imagery to show how the mindset of a single person changes as he ages, feels the ill effects of age, and comes to appreciate Homer's wisdom late in life after spending his youth at ease: ἀλλὰ σὺ ταῦτα μάθων βιότου ποτὶ τέρμα / ψυχῇ τῶν ἀγαθῶν τλήθι χαριζόμενος "But you, learn this [what Homer meant] at the end of your life and endure, taking delight with your soul in the good things" (20W².11-12).

reasoning that if Homer could use the simile in the battle context of *Iliad* 6, so too could Simonides have inserted it into his battle-themed historical elegy.

³¹ Poets regularly present themselves as aged. On this trope in general, see Hunter (2001: 251); for the theme in Simonides, see Mace (2001: 195).

While this elegy most likely belongs to a sympotic context,³² where it probably served to remind the drinkers to enjoy good things while they last (20.12 W²), and the context of the Iliadic simile is a lull on the battlefield,³³ the close link Simonides forges with Homer shows the particular importance, flexibility, and durability of the leaf/human likeness. For Simonides, the leaf simile is the most important part of Homer. This passage shows, therefore, the importance of Homer's take on the connection between trees and human beings for later literature. The Simonides elegy shows how later poets can use the connection between trees and human life to invoke Homer self-consciously in order to make room for themselves in contrast to or in line with the epic tradition inaugurated by Homer.

POET, NARRATOR, AND CHARACTERS

We now turn to the narratological questions we raised at the beginning, aiming to distinguish the poet, narrator, and characters. In my view Homer creates a narrator and characters through whom he tells the stories of the poems and whose diction and imagery he controls. The narrator is an omniscient, omnipresent, utterly authoritative and generally unobtrusive presence in the poem. The speaking characters have less knowledge of the story's events than the narrator, and these characters articulate sentiments in accordance with or in opposition to those of the narrator. Moreover, because the poet allows his narrator greater knowledge of the story than he does his characters, and because we can see stark differences in diction and the use of imagery between the narrator and speaking characters, we can conclude that the telling of the epic story happens on two levels, a higher level occupied by the narrator

³² Fr. 19W² may also have been part of a *sphragis* to the Plataea elegy (fr. 10-18 W²), as we mentioned in n. 30 above.

³³ Sympotic themes may not be too far distant from the conversation between Glaucus and Diomedes, on which see Pelliccia (2002).

and a lower level occupied by the characters. Despite these differences, we can also see that the poet constantly blurs the lines between these narrative levels by having the characters use diction characteristic of the narrator or by letting them speak self-consciously of their place in a story or by letting them tell stories themselves.

The application of narratology to Homeric studies, undertaken by Irene de Jong (2004 [1987]), Scott Richardson (1990), Deborah Beck (2005) and others, has focused productively on bringing the primary narrator out of the shadows in which Homer shrouded him. de Jong quite rightly argues and convincingly proves that the *Iliad* does not “tell itself” and that the primary narrator-focalizer (designated the NF₁) is just as much a creation of the poet as the characters are. She sees the NF₁ as the most powerful entity in the poem because he controls the telling of the story. The characters, on her model, are subordinate to the NF₁: in her view there are two starkly separate levels of narrative, the third person narration and the direct speech of the characters. The NF₁ connects these levels with embedded focalization when he narrates in third person from the perspective of one or another of the characters. I echo Seth Schein in calling the explication of embedded focalization a highlight of *Narrators and Focalizers*,³⁴ and I am interested to show here how similes in speech represent another area where these narrative levels collide and blur.³⁵

³⁴ Schein (1991: 583): “Since reading de Jong's book, I have responded to the *Iliad* (and the *Odyssey*) with greater alertness and sensitivity, especially to embedded focalization. As a result, the characters seem psychologically more complex, the style more vivid and nuanced, and the overall poetic structure even more sophisticated than they previously did.”

³⁵ de Jong does not treat discuss similes in speech as such. Her remarks in *Narrators and Focalizers* deal with the interesting issue of focalization through similes (2004 [1987]: 123-136). In de Jong (2004b: 14), she rightly points out the omnitemporal nature of narrative similes. Yet de Jong seems to use this fact to justify dissociating narrative similes from the narrator: similes are not “windows on the narrator’s own world” (14). Even so, they should nevertheless be connected with the narrator because they originate from the narrator.

So it is right to distinguish poet from narrator. de Jong devotes the first chapter of *Narrators and Focalizers* to dismantling the edifice of Homeric objectivity that wed an imperceptible narrator to the person of a detached poet. de Jong declares, “it is important to realize that this NF₁, as a fictional delegate of Homer, is after all a *creation* of the poet like the characters” (2004 [1987]: 45).³⁶

Students of Homer are inclined to link poet with narrator because of the invocations to the Muse, most especially at *Il.* 2.484-493 before the catalogue of ships. In this passage particularly, the poet vividly portrays the narrator as a bard at work striving to be one with the goddesses, to be a superhumanly perfect teller of events. After the invocation, the narrator largely disappears into the fabric of the narrative, surfacing only intermittently to pose questions, offer gnomic statements, or stir pathos.³⁷ The poet makes the transition between the first person invocations and the third-person narrative seamless in order that the divine grace of the Muses flow unimpeded over everything his narrator says. In the invocation itself, the poet has the narrator supplicate the Muses, urging them to attend the narrator’s song. If we recognize the energy the poet expends on the rhetoric of the invocation, we see how the poet uses the Muse invocation passages to create an authoritative narrator:

ἔσπετε νῦν μοι, Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ’ ἔχουσαι— ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστέ, πάρεστέ τε, ἴστε τε πάντα, ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν, οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν— οἳ τινες ἡγεμόνες Δαναῶν καὶ κοίρανοι ἦσαν. πληθὺν δ’ οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ’ ὀνομήνω, οὐδ’ εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλῶσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ’ εἶεν, φωνὴ δ’ ἄρρηκτος, χάλκεον δέ μοι ἦτορ ἐνείη· εἰ μὴ Ὀλυμπιάδες Μοῦσαι, Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο θυγατέρες, μνησαίαθ’ ὅσοι ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθον. }	485 490
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³⁶ Cf. Richardson (1990: 8): “The Homeric narrator is one of the least understood characters in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, yet his role is no less crucial than that of Achilles or Odysseus. It is only through him that we are allowed into the world of the story, and it is time that we become better acquainted with our guide.”

³⁷ On these devices, see de Jong’s useful list (2004: 15-18).

ἄρχους αὖ νηῶν ἐρέω, νῆάς τε προπάσας.

Tell me now, O Muses who have Olympian homes—
for you are goddesses, and you are present, and you know all things, 485
but we hear only rumor, and we do not know anything.
I could not declare or name the multitude,
not even if I had ten tongues, and ten mouths,
and my voice were unbreakable, and my heart brazen;
unless the Olympian Muses, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus,
called to my mind how many came under Ilium. 490
But I will say the leaders of the ships, and the whole number of ships.

In the Muse invocations we see the narrator at work creating the song before our eyes. The narrator adopts a strikingly humble pose before the Muses and strips himself of any of his own ingenuity or personality in order to win their favor. To show how much more powerful the Muses are than he is, the narrator takes pains to contrast the divine and mortal realms. Line 486 runs parallel with the preceding verse: “You” (the goddesses) contrast with “us” (mortals); divine presence (*πάρεστέ*) and perfect knowledge (*ἴστε τε πάντα*)—that is to say, sight—far exceed human hearing (*κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν*) and the ignorance resulting from it (*οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν*).³⁸ The narrator goes on to elaborate how much the goddesses exceed human capabilities. Without their help, the narrator could not accomplish the upcoming catalogue even if he could clone himself nine times and replace his flesh and blood with mechanized parts. Were we to take this scene literally, we might think that the narrator has no personality, but this invocation is carefully contrived by the poet to give his narrator ultimate authority.³⁹ When the narrator is small and insignificant compared with the goddesses, the Muses look grander. But when the narrator goes on to expound the catalogue of ships (in fact two catalogues) successfully, the poet

³⁸ For a perceptive discussion of the differences between seeing and hearing in this passage, see Elmer (2005: 27).

³⁹ Cf. de Jong (2006).

confirms to his audience that the narrator has won the support of the Muses, and the stature and authority of narrator and poet grow all the more, in retrospect.⁴⁰

So the poet takes pains to construct a narrator who has divinity on his side and as a result of this effort the narrator is imbued with real authority. But the poet sometimes blurs the line between what the narrator says and the absolute straightforward truth. Indeed, James V. Morrison (1992) has argued that the poet creates a narrator who looks authoritative and trustworthy in order to mislead his audience (the poet does this in order to keep his audience engaged with the story, 7).⁴¹ In his view, the poet exerts tight control over the narrator, “a fictional entity internal to the text just as surely as the gods and characters are,” (12).⁴² Morrison further helps us to realize that the narrator is designed with a particular agenda of his own, which can end up at odds with the perspective of characters.⁴³ In short, the narrator has not *the* point of

⁴⁰ de Jong is therefore right to read the Muse invocations as a rhetorical ploy by the narrator to enhance his authority: “The NF₁ of the *Iliad* describes the presentation as being now in the Muses’ hands, then in his own, the overall suggestion being that they are *both* involved. The intended effect of this ‘double presentation’ is an indirect and unobtrusive self-recommendation of the NF₁, who, as the Thamyras digression in B 595-600 makes clear, is only too aware of the dangers of an open rivalry with the Muses” (52).

⁴¹ Other scholars who suggest that the Homeric narrator aims sometimes to mislead include Winkler (1990) and Nagler (1990). In a provocative (and controversial) reading of Penelope’s motivations in the second half of the *Odyssey*, Winkler suggests that the narrator presents a Penelope who meekly accepts her fate until she tricks Odysseus with the bed. In that moment “the poet make[s] us see that we had probably been underestimating her, taking her somewhat for granted, as Odysseus did. She, of course, is not all wives; like Odysseus she is the extraordinary case, the best wife for the best husband.” (160-161). Nagler, in a study of Odyssean ethics, suggests that the poet’s proem should not be taken literally. For Nagler, the proem is not actually about the suffering of Odysseus’ companions but a subtle effort to justify Odysseus’ slaughter of the suitors.

⁴² On the deceptiveness of the *Odyssey*’s narrator, see Richardson (2008).

⁴³ In his reading of *Iliad* 1 (23-33), Morrison repeatedly shows how the prayers, threats and other predictions of the characters do not ultimately come true and are therefore not aligned with the narrator’s overarching story. For example, Agamemnon’s threat that Chryseis will weave at

view but *a* point of view on the action of the poem. We shall show that characters use similes in speech in emulation of the authoritative narrator, and when they do this, the poem's audience perceives the use of these similes as an affirmation or a challenge to the dominant perspective of the narrator. The poet coordinates these perspectives in order to tell a rich and engaging story and to interrogate crucial traditional themes and concepts like the nature of heroism and the ultimate value or purpose of poetic commemoration.

We turn now from the connection between poet and narrator to that between narrator and characters. I mean to stress here that while Homer can and does differentiate between his narrator and the characters, that the relationship between narrator and characters is usually close and the line between them often blurs. We may begin by examining how “external” a narrator Homer really is to show that the narrator is not so removed from the world of the characters. de Jong states that “mortals as they are now” passages are a clear indication that the NF₁ is an external narrator, that is, he does not participate in the action of the *fabula*. From the vantage point of the present, he recounts the legends of long ago. This, for sure, is true enough. More important, though, is the impact of these passages on the audience. The οἶοι νῦν βροτοί passages make the action more vivid than otherwise to the audience. When Diomedes lifts the boulder at *Il.* 5.302-304, the narrator remarks:

ὃ δὲ χερμάδιον λάβε χειρί
 Τυδείδης, μέγα ἔργον, ὃ οὐ δύο γ' ἄνδρε φέροισιν,
 οἶοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσ'. ὃ δέ μιν ῥέα πάλλε καὶ οἶος·

But the son of Tydeus grabbed the boulder with his hand,
 a great feat, which two men could not carry,
 as mortals are now; but Diomedes alone wielded it easily.

Agamemnon's loom in Argos and share his bed is overturned by Apollo's plague. Cf. Rabel (1997: 20): “In modern terms, we might say that the heroes and heroines of the *Iliad* exercise their power of direct and unmediated speech in the expression of various unique points of view that are completely independent of, and often even at odds with, the point of view of the poem's narrator.”

The narrator's aside here does create a gulf between men today who are weak from Diomedes who is heroically strong. But it is worth noting that this comment does not separate the audience from the story, but just the opposite. The narrator does not so much take his distance from this action, but rather creates a bridge that connects his audience in our time with the heroes. He is trying to quantify, if only to approximate, Diomedes' incomprehensible strength in order that his audience understand better how much more powerful Diomedes is than they are.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, characters are to be distinguished from the narrator because they use language differently. The diction of the characters differs from that of the narrator, as Griffin (1986) and de Jong (1988) have shown. Griffin has pointed out that abstract nouns like *ἰποοσύνη* and *αἰδώς*, words that express strong emotion like *δύστηνος* and *δειλός*, and expressions that pass moral judgment about the action like *ἡ θέμις ἐστί* appear significantly more in character-text than in narrator-text.⁴⁵ Griffin concludes from his study that the poet deliberately leaves the work of moral judgment and the expression of emotions (whether anger or compassion) to the characters. He notes a contrast in "restraint" between Homer and Vergil, whose narrator regularly bursts with moral comment about the travails of his characters.⁴⁶ Griffin ultimately uses his conclusions as ammunition against the oralists, contending that such a

⁴⁴ Richardson (1990: 177) aptly stresses the bridging function of the *οἱοι νῦν βροτοί* passages, insightfully noting that the bridge extends to any auditor or reader at any time: "This distinction between men of today and men of the heroic age refers clearly to the time of the narrating, even more so than an address to an undefined narratee, who may be anyone at any time. Homer is indeed placing himself and his audience in relation to his heroes, but the issue is not so much a temporal as a qualitative one."

⁴⁵ de Jong (1988) followed up Griffin's article with a note pointing out that embedded focalization explains almost half of the cases when a word that Griffin associated with direct speech appears in the narrator-text.

⁴⁶ Griffin cites as examples *fortunati ambo!* (*Aen* 9.446) on the death of Nisus and Euryalus and *casu iniquo* 6.475 of Dido's misfortune.

systematic division of vocabulary is a sign of a consummate poet who intends to leave ambiguity about the moral meaning of the action for the audience to contemplate and who creates vivid and emotionally expressive human characters.

The larger project of comparing the expression of characters with the narrator has been quite fruitful. Differences between character-text and narrator-text have been found in the *Odyssey* by de Jong (1992) and Beck (2005). de Jong finds that Odysseus' *apologoi* are filled with comments in emotional and evaluative language characteristic of direct speech and with vocabulary found predominantly in direct speech. Beck extends the line of this inquiry, comparing how the characters Menelaus and Odysseus, the poet Demodocus, and the narrator employ and manipulate speech-introduction formulas. She argues for a continuum in the usage of these formulas that implies subtle characterization: Menelaus does not take much interest in the emotions of his interlocutors while Odysseus does. Demodocus deploys formulas more similar to the narrator than to the characters, which is logical because both the primary narrator and Demodocus are poets.

It is my aim to build on this work in the present study, taking tree-imagery as my focus. Recognizing that imagery, and in particular tree-imagery, is common both to narration and the direct speech, we are compelled to inquire whether characters use this imagery in a similar way as the narrator does or differently.

A substantial amount of scholarship, not all of it explicitly narratological, has claimed that various characters are poet-figures. Among the characters cited as poet-figures are Achilles,

Odysseus, Helen, and Andromache.⁴⁷ If the poet represents himself through a character in the epics, the line between poet and character necessarily blurs.

We shall speak more about Achilles, who has received the most attention from scholars. The flurry of interest began in 1956 with the publication of Adam Parry's "The Language of Achilles." In it Parry wondered whether and how Homer's formulaic language could give rise to a character like Achilles who comes to reject the traditional values of heroic society encoded in that very Homeric language. This essay deals squarely with the question of how separable narrator text can be from direct speech because Parry claimed that Achilles expressed himself in a way that set him apart from minor characters like Sarpedon and from the poet whose business is to extol heroic achievement while Achilles questions these traditional values in his disillusionment. Martin (1989: 148-161) thoroughly reviews the criticisms made to Parry's influential and provocative essay before offering his own method of showing how Achilles stands out from the tradition.

Martin believes that analysis of characterization must begin from the analysis of a whole speech in context and follows Parry (1966) in believing that "the individuality which is so obviously there, and so much of the poem's greatness, must lie in the *juxtaposition* of formulae." To that end, Martin's project is to find out whether Achilles' expressions in his great speech to Odysseus (9.308-429) constitute a "deviation from a norm with the understanding that 'deviant' language (in this case, formula use) by itself tells us nothing about a performer or performance. It gains meaning only when compared at each turn with the apparent norm" (161). Martin

⁴⁷ On Achilles, an influential and detailed treatment is Martin (1989). The similarities between Odysseus and the poet are discussed by Thalmann (1984: 170-179); Suerbaum (1999 [1968]) compares the style of Odysseus' *apologoi* with the main narrative. Cf. Bergren (2008 [1983]). A recent discussion on Odysseus is Bakker (2009). On the affinities between Helen and the poet, see Clader (1976: 6-11), Bergren (2008 [1980]), Jenkins (1999), and Elmer (2005).

distinguishes between syntagmatic formulas (repeated phrases) and paradigmatic formulas (a word regularly used in the same metrical slot). Martin's Chart 1 (167-170) shows that Achilles' speech is filled with paradigmatic formulas and is sparse with syntagmatic formulas, so Achilles, Martin concludes, is using traditional vocabulary differently from other speakers. More specifically "Achilles' use of syntagmatic formulas (the sole cases open to interpretation) is idiosyncratic only in that he uses expressions elsewhere used exclusively by gods in speeches, or by the narrator in diegesis. Thus there is a cohesiveness to the 'deviations' in Achilles' formula use" (170).⁴⁸ Martin compares Achilles' diction with other speakers in the poem in the same way as I want in this study to compare characters' use of imagery with each other and with the narrator.

Scholars have seen Odysseus as a poet figure especially because Alcinous tells Odysseus that he tells his story with the skill of a bard (*Od.* 11.363-369) and because of the narrator's suggestive simile that likens Odysseus stringing his bow to kill the suitors to a bard stringing his lyre (*Od.* 21.403-409).⁴⁹ The fact that he spares Phemius (*Od.* 22.372-377) also implies that he feels a special sympathy with the Ithacan court-poet. Bergren (2008 [1983]) argues that Odysseus, like the poet, shapes the temporal landscape of the *apologoi* with analepses and prolepses, mirroring his own *polytropheia* in his own storytelling in order to impress upon the

⁴⁸ To take a specific example, Martin shows convincingly that the duplication of 9.366 at 23.261 prompts the conclusion that both speeches draw from the conventional genre of the raiding boast, but in Achilles' mouth, such echoes assert that Agamemnon has perpetrated a raid on *him*: "We can see this as a creative reshaping at two levels: a familiar speech-genre is redeployed for new effect; and thus, Achilles appears as a skillful manipulator of the conventional, a rhetorician" (173).

⁴⁹ de Jong (2001: 521-22 *ad* 406-9) lists bibliography on this simile and asserts that one of its secondary functions (i.e. implicit functions) is self-praise for the narrator: "Inserting an image of himself at this climactic moment, the narrator subtly suggests his own importance: 'where would Odysseus' glory be, if there were no singers to immortalize it?'"

Phaeacians the inevitability of his *nostos* (so that they will send him on his way).⁵⁰ Bergren sees Odysseus using the narrator's storytelling techniques to clothe his message with greater authority, just as I see characters do by using tree/human imagery.

Helen has been interpreted as a poet-figure because she weaves at *Il.* 3.125-128, because she is aware that she and Hector will be the subjects of future epic song (*Il.* 6.354-358),⁵¹ because the drug she administers to Menelaus and Telemachus in *Odyssey* 4 cures their pain just as heroic poetry is a cure for being forgotten (4.220-231) and tells a story about bathing Odysseus at Troy (4.235-264). Finally her mimetic voice, on display in Menelaus' story of Helen calling to the Achaean heroes in the voices of their wives, can be read as especially poetic (4.269-279).⁵² Helen's weaving has been read as a poetic gesture since her tapestry depicts the sufferings of the Trojans and Achaeans just as the poet's work takes Achaean and Trojan suffering as its subject. Bergren (2008 [1980]) likens her weaving to the poet's narration of the battle in Books 11-15 because both episodes suspend the temporal verisimilitude of the epic, and

⁵⁰ Other scholars have stressed the differences between Odysseus and the narrator. Suerbaum (1999 [1968]) points out that Odysseus lacks the narrator's full omniscience since he does not know Zeus' will (without being told by Calypso) or the inner thoughts of anyone besides himself. de Jong (1992) provides an annotated list of Odysseus' subjective comments and of Odysseus' vocabulary that appears predominantly in character text. The importance of such a list, according to de Jong, as a foundation to help us appreciate not only how the *poet* transforms folk-tale elements into a narrative but also to evaluate it as a *speech*.

⁵¹ Cf. Graziosi and Haubold (2010: 43-44 and 180 *ad* 357-8) and Blondell (2010: 19-20). Elmer (2005) has suggested that Helen has more in common with a maker of epigrams than with the epic poet himself.

⁵² On the affinity between Helen's drug and poetry, see Clader (1976: 33), Bergren (2008 [1981]: 116-119), and Goldhill (1988: 20-23). Austin (1994: 78) calls Helen the "*logos* maker, the shaper of the story" when she recollects stories of Troy in Book 4 and notes the mimetic power of her voice when she calls from outside the Trojan Horse (82). Cf. Goldhill (1988: 20): "She [Helen] will take up the role of the bard at the meal and sing *eoikota*." Zeitlin (1981: 321) compares Helen's voice to the voice of the Delian maidens in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 156-164 who sing poems of Apollo, Leto, and Artemis.

to the poet's use of generic epithets because these epithets describe the nouns they modify not as they are at a given moment but as they are by nature, just as the tapestry depicts the suffering not of the war at a particular moment but at any moment.⁵³

Graziosi and Haubold (2010: 197 *ad* 6.414-28, 414, and 436-7) suggest that Andromache uses the language of the narrator when she describes the sack of her hometown Plakos and when she warns Hector of the approach of the Ajaxes, Idomeneus, Agamemnon and Menelaus, and Diomedes. They point to the verse-final phrase *δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς* (414) and *ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς* as characteristic of narrator-text not character speech.⁵⁴

IMAGERY AS A MARKER OF 'POETIC' SPEECH

In this section we will deal with two points. First, how does a character's use of similes connect to him to the narrator? Second, is it proper to say of a Homeric speech that it is "modeled" on the main narrative (or vice versa)? We shall show that scholars have concluded that characters who use similes in speech are linked by that practice to the narrator. To the second question we shall argue that while we cannot determine with exactness whether one speech is directly "modeled" on another, it is still fair to say that the poet plays the two registers off each other, his narrator against his characters.

I.

In their intriguing study "Speech as a Personality Symbol: The Case of Achilles" Friedrich and Redfield study Achilles' speech patterns (down to the level of his particle usage) and rhetorical flourishes, including his richness of detail, his cumulative imagery, his use of

⁵³ Cf. Graziosi and Haubold (2010: 6-7).

⁵⁴ Yet to be fair, we may wonder whether we would expect a character to describe the sack of a town with noticeably different diction than the narrator. In other words, the coincidence of the overlap in diction between narrator and character may be accidental.

hypothetical comparisons and similes, and his directness, and find him to be a particularly “poetic” speaker. They insightfully distinguish between two kinds of *effective* speech—speech that persuades others, at which a politician would excel, and speech that accurately expresses what one deeply feels, at which a lyric poet would excel (240). Friedrich and Redfield claim that Achilles is effective in the latter sense (and that Odysseus excels in the former). Friedrich and Redfield add that Achilles’ poetic expressiveness connects not with his audience in the poem but reaches the audience of the poem: “The poetry which makes his rhetoric so powerfully expressive does not, however, enable him to manipulate men effectively; and so the others are not persuaded to join him against Agamemnon. But its power does enable him to touch a second audience, namely the reader, and so to create an ironic complicity.”⁵⁵

Friedrich and Redfield see Achilles’ use of similes as an extension of his propensity to spin out hypothetical scenarios as when he boasts to Lycaon that the fish will eat the fat from his bones as he lies unburied in the river Scamander (*Il.* 21.122-7). They call “remarkable” and “gems of the epic” (243) Achilles’ similes likening himself to a mother-bird during the embassy (9.323-8) and his comparison of Patroclus to the girl begging to be picked up (16.7-11). Even more apposite given its similarity to the boast over Lycaon’s corpse is Achilles’ simile directed to Hector denying him a proper burial (*Il.* 22.261-267):

Ἕκτορ, μή μοι, ἄλαστε, συνημοσύνας ἀγόρευε.
 ὥς οὐκ ἔστι λέονσι καὶ ἀνδράσιν ὄρκια πιστά,
 οὐδὲ λύκοι τε καὶ ἄρνες ὁμόφρονα θυμὸν ἔχουσιν,
 ἀλλὰ κακὰ φρονέουσι διαμπερές ἀλλήλοισιν,
 ὥς οὐκ ἔστ’ ἐμέ καὶ σέ φιλήμεναι, οὐδέ τι νῶϊν
 ὄρκια ἔσονται, πρὶν ἢ ἑτερόν γε πεσόντα
 αἵματος ἄσαι Ἄρηα, ταλαύρινον πολεμιστήν.

Hector, don’t speak to me about agreements, you wretch.
 Just as it is impossible for men and lions to have trustworthy compacts,

⁵⁵ In this connection Friedrich and Redfield anticipate the comments of de Jong (2004 [1987]: 160-168) on external analepses, which, she argues, have both an *argument function* (a message directed to the characters) and a *key function* (information for the narratees).

and wolves and lambs do not have minds compatible for each other,
but continually do they plot evils against each other,
in that way it is impossible for you and me to be friends,
and by no means will there be compacts for us two, before one of us falls
to sate Ares, the warrior steady under his shield, with blood.

Clarke (1995: 141) suggests that the meaning of the simile emerges not only from its immediate context in the duel between Achilles and Hector but from all the lion similes in the *Iliad*.

Accordingly, drawing from a series of bestial similes that describe other warriors than Achilles, Clarke shows how lion similes express the self-destructive impulses that drive warriors to fight:

χάρμη, μένος, ἀλκή, μανία. When Achilles, therefore, describes his relationship as the relationship a lion has with a man, the audience is to understand that he feels these self-destructive feelings. Achilles here uses bestial imagery to describe the isolation he feels in the wake of Patroclus' death and his own knowledge that he will die soon after Hector dies.

Clarke's study is valuable because it shows the relationship between a character's simile in speech and a defined group of narrative similes. In this study, I shall adopt a similar method as Clarke but study speeches that connect to tree imagery. But while Clarke shows that narrative lion similes and Achilles' simile in Book 22 both make vivid the self-destructive psychological aspects of heroism, I have found that when Achilles, Glaucus, and Odysseus use tree imagery they do so to express ideas that are sometimes very different from those expressed by the narrator.

Martin (1989) applauds Friedrich and Redfield for attempting their portrait of Achilles' character by analyzing his speech patterns, while he echoes Messing's (1981) criticism that they suggest that Achilles speaks as if he were a real person and not a literary character. Martin adds that Achilles is not the only character who uses the poetic devices I enumerated above (including his fondness for similes). Nevertheless, Martin does concur with Friedrich and Redfield, without

much further elaboration, that Achilles' frequent similes make him a "poetic" speaker (193). For my purposes, it is interesting and important that more characters than Achilles use similes and are considered poetic characters since it is not my aim here to show that Achilles is unique. Rather, the fact that so many characters use similes in speech testifies to the importance of similes in speech as a rhetorical device. Certainly the careful comparison of a series of tree-images in speech with similar images from the narrative will reveal how characters differ from the narrator.

II.

Is it fair to say that (to take an example from my second chapter) Achilles' oath on Agamemnon's scepter (*Il.* 1.234-239) is "modeled" on the narrator's obituary for the Trojan Simoesius (*Il.* 4.473-489), who falls like a poplar out of which a craftsman will fashion a wheel-rim? Such a statement really is too strong given our imperfect understanding of the composition of the *Iliad*, of chronology in particular. Such a statement would imply that a single author, over the course of four books, staged a deliberate correspondence between two passages that he would have expected his audience to recognize.⁵⁶ The most significant problem with this theory is that it is impossible to say definitively which direction the influence runs. Would Achilles' speech be based on Simoesius, or would Simoesius be based on Achilles? And how could the passage in Book 1 receive poetic resonance from Book 4 if the *Iliad* is to be read and understood in order from book to book?

It makes more sense to imagine that the poet has as part of his word-hoard a stock of

⁵⁶ Scodel (2002: 1-41) argues that scholars have greatly overestimated the knowledge and competence of the audience.

conventional images.⁵⁷ That Homer's imagery is conventional is suggested from the repeated subjects and themes of the similes.⁵⁸ A belief in the conventional origins of similes does not mean that their use in the poem is pat or uninteresting. Indeed the formulaic system of words, phrases, and images provides a background against which Homer can innovate. As Graziosi and Haubold (2010) have recently affirmed: "Formulae have a specific shape, and they do inspire trust...Although the formulaic system is used with remarkable flexibility and inventiveness in the *Iliad*, rhetorically, it conveys an impression of stability...Traditional formulations describe the world as it should be" (14-15). Against this apparently stable background, the poet is constantly innovating: "It is rewarding to pay attention to divergences and adaptations, because the poet often harnesses the expectations of competent listeners to great dramatic effect" (17). For us, such "divergences and adaptations" will reside in the subtle manipulation of details in the likenesses from one passage to the next. We will ask, as we examine each passage, how its details contribute to the speaker or narrator's rhetorical goals.

We ought not imagine, therefore, the relationship of one passage to another as something narrow or arrow-like, one passage connecting directly and exclusively to another. Rather, we should imagine a more flexible model whereby in the case of two similar images in different

⁵⁷ The antiquity of this class of imagery, stretching back perhaps to Proto Indo-European poetry suggests that associations between tenor and vehicle were traditional. So, too, the work of Scott (1974) on simile families in particular has demonstrated that types of similes were connected by convention to particular moments of the battle narrative. Cf. Redfield (1994 [1975]: 187) "The poet reaches for some memory or image to clarify the scene he has set before us; he takes the image which strikes him as having the greatest potency in its context. Because this process is unreflective, the recurrent themes of the similes can be taken to reflect and express a substratum of the poet's mind or—since probably few similes are his original invention—of the poetic tradition in which he is at home."

⁵⁸ Similes are often categorized by type. Cf. Fränkel (1977 [1921], Scott (1974 and 2009), and Moulton (1977). Redfield (1994 [1975]: 186-192) offers a stimulating synoptic account of the themes of the similes, arguing that they drive home the belief that nature is hostile to man.

parts of the Homeric corpus the poet draws from the same cubby of his image-hoard. Yet, with only five exceptions, Homer does not repeat similes verbatim.⁵⁹ So, as the words are arranged differently, so too must the meaning change from passage to passage.

Foley's (1999) notion of "traditional referentiality" is a helpful way of conceiving how similar passages across the Homeric corpus are related to each other. According to Foley's model of traditional referentiality, a noun-epithet phrase like γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη, a typical scene like a lament, or a story pattern like the return song, connects the poem being performed to the previous tradition of similar songs or to similar scenes or phrases in other parts of the same song:

Pars pro toto, the part standing for the whole, as it were. 'Grey-eyed Athena' and 'wise Penelope' are thus neither brilliant attributions in unrelated situations nor mindless metrical fillers of last resort. Rather they index the characters they name, in all their complexity, not merely in one given situation or even poem but against an enormously larger traditional backdrop" (18).

Far from hindering effective expression, these patterns "drive reception" (20).⁶⁰ While Scodel (2002) criticizes the epiphanic language that is sometimes used to describe how the poet vividly brings his subject before his audience (12) and cautions that each individual in a given audience will not know the tradition in the same way as everyone else (13), and despite the fact that "tradition," or, in Nagler's terms, "*Gestalt*," are idealized and rather amorphous concepts (given how little we know about the precursors of Homeric epic), such ideas are still helpful because they help us see how parts of the Homeric corpus relate to each other.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Cf. Edwards (1991: 24, n. 2).

⁶⁰ Nagler's (1974) concepts of *Gestalt* and allomorph are akin to Foley's notion of traditional referentiality. For Nagler, groups of passages with similar themes or diction (the allomorphs), taken together, express part of a larger essential idea (the *Gestalt*). Scott (2009) has applied Nagler's ideas to similes: families of similes are all derived from an "ideal" form (the "simileme").

⁶¹ Danek (2006: 66) also relates Foley's "traditional referentiality" to the traditional associations engendered by similes. Danek argues that the poet innovates by extending traditional associations

Most akin to the present subject are the traditional type scenes, and in *Homer's Traditional Art* Foley productively explores the ways in which feasting scenes in the *Odyssey* and lament scenes in the *Iliad* are adapted to specific contexts. Foley even argues (1999: 188-199) that Andromache adapts the traditional form of the lament, mourning Hector in Book 6 proleptically. This striking change underscores Andromache's helplessness in the face of Hector's inevitable fate. Likewise, I shall be arguing in this work that tree imagery is traditional and that characters adapt the features of this imagery to craft their speeches. Still, as we argued above, there is a real differential in power between the human characters whose speeches we will study and the bodiless quasi-immortal narrator imbued by the grace of the divine Muse. Indeed, in the omnitemporal world of the Homeric similes we can glimpse how the "mind" of the narrator works, how the narrator will turn from the course of the main narrative so suddenly, sketch a vivid and all-encompassing scene that illuminates by a subtle blend of similarity and contrast to its immediate context the larger meaning of the action that stimulated the move to the simile world.

If the narrator demonstrates the acuity, suppleness, and easy power of his mind by crafting similes, when characters make their own similes, they demonstrate the acuity, suppleness and power of their own minds to the narratees. In the sense, then, that the simile-world is, properly speaking, the province of the narrator, and that it is a marked (but not uncommon) rhetorical move for a character to create a simile of his own, that we may speak of the characters modeling their similes on the narrator's.

to unusual contexts, as when at *Il.* 14.14-22 the poet likens Nestor's unease to a storm at sea, an image typically used of the indecisive fighting of armies. The poet lays the groundwork for the innovation with the storm simile at 13.795-802.

PARADEIGMATA AND SIMILES-IN-SPEECH

By way of conclusion we will set out briefly the scope and themes of the upcoming body chapters and show how they relate to one another. In doing so, we shall suggest that mythological paradeigmata and similes-in-speech resemble each other in structure and rhetorical function. Although paradigmata do differ from imagery in that imagery in and of itself does not shape behavior as directly as a mythological example does, still both images and mythological stories are sites where characters adapt traditional material to enhance their own persuasiveness.

The chief studies of mythological paradigmata have been undertaken by Willcock, Gaisser, Braswell, and Alden.⁶² Their studies show how freely the poet manipulates the details of the speeches to make the “case” of the speech stronger. For example, Willcock (1964) illustrates how Achilles tells an idiosyncratic version of the Niobe story, in which Niobe eats after Leto has killed Niobe’s children because Achilles is trying to persuade Priam to eat after Achilles has killed Hector. Achilles manipulates the “facts” of the myth in order to make it parallel the story of the *Iliad*. In this way can Achilles more convincingly bring the authority of mythology to bear upon Priam to persuade him, even if Achilles must have his thumb on the scale, as it were. Gaisser (1969), as we will show in Ch. 3, argues that Glaucus does not say why the gods became angry with Bellerophon after he settles in Lycia to raise his two sons and daughter because Glaucus wants to play up the theme that the motives of the gods are inscrutable.⁶³ Willcock (1977) further illustrates how myth is not only the place where the poet innovates but that

⁶² Willcock (1964; 1977), Gaisser (1969), Braswell (1971), and Alden (2000). For more detailed discussion of Gaisser’s argument, see further Ch. 3.

⁶³ Cf. Alden (2000: 167): “The career of Bellerophon functions as a paradigmatic warning to Diomedes as he listens to it: Bellerophon enjoys extraordinary favour from the gods, but this favour was suddenly withdrawn in an apparently arbitrary fashion, and the same thing might happen to Diomedes, who has been achieving remarkable feats under the patronage of Athene just before he hears about Bellerophon.”

characters also make statements inconsistent with the rest of the *Iliad*, as when Hector tells the troops at the beginning of Book 6 that he is off to tell the Trojan elders and the women to sacrifice to Athena, although Helenus only mentioned orders to the women. Hector adds the detail about the elders because it would be inappropriate to say to soldiers that he is visiting the women.⁶⁴ Then, too, scholars have supposed that in Phoenix's story the poet invents the name Kleopatre for Meleager's wife to connect her closely with Patroclus, who later successfully entreats Achilles to dismiss his anger and rejoin battle, just as Kleopatre does with Meleager.⁶⁵

I am building upon this work by claiming that the characters use similes in speech is quite an analogous way. Similes in speech and paradigmata are similar structurally and rhetorically. Both similes and paradeigmata are built by ring composition. So, too, similes and paradeigmata are employed to help the speaker win his argument.

Achilles' oath on Agamemnon's scepter is framed by explicit references to the oath (*Il.* 1.234-239):

ἀλλ' ἔκ τοι ἐρέω, καὶ ἐπὶ μέγαν ὄρκον ὁμοῦμαι
 πρὸς Διὸς εἰρύεται· ὃ δέ τοι μέγας ἔσσεται ὄρκος

Both pieces of the frame fit into the second half of the hexameter and they share similar vocabulary. So too is Glaucus' simile of the leaves set off by ring composition (*Il.* 6.146-149):

οἷη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
 ὥς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ ἣ μὲν φύει, ἣ δ' ἀπολήγει.

Again we find the replication of vocabulary at beginning and end and the bifurcated structure.

Odysseus' recollection of the palm on Delos is also set off from the rest of the hero's speech in ring composition (*Od.* 6.160-169):

⁶⁴ Cf. Graziosi and Haubold (2010: 106 *ad* 110-18) who argue that Hector modifies Helenus' instructions here to promote cohesion among the troops while he is gone.

⁶⁵ On Kleopatre's two names, see further Hainsworth (1993: 136 *ad* 9.561-3).

οὐ γάρ πω τοιοῦτον ἐγὼ ἶδον ὀφθαλμοῖσιν,
οὔτ' ἀνδρ' οὔτε γυναῖκα· σέβας μ' ἔχει εἰσορόωντα.

ᾧ δ' αὖτως καὶ κείνο ἰδὼν ἐτεθήπεα θυμῷ
δὴν, ἐπεὶ οὐ πω τοῖον ἀνῆλυθεν ἐκ δόρυ γαίης,
ὥς σέ, γύναι, ἄγαμαί τε τέθηπρά τε δειδία τ' αἰνῶς
γούνων ἄψασθαι.

Here the structure is more elaborate since there are two repetitions in close proximity. κείνο ἰδὼν answers τοιοῦτον ἐγὼ ἶδον after the narration of the visit to Delos. Then there is a second ring connecting ᾧ δ' αὖτως, when Odysseus sums up his feeling of awe before the sacred tree, with ὥς σέ, γύναι. This ring underscores that Odysseus feels the same speechlessness, fear, and wonder when standing before Nausicaa as he did before the palm on Delos: ἐτεθήπεα θυμῷ ≈ τέθηπρά τε δειδία τ' αἰνῶς. Finally, Odysseus' story of constructing the bedpost is framed by his expressions of disbelief that anyone could move the bed (*Od.* 23:184-204):

τίς δέ μοι ἄλλοσε θῆκε λέχος;
...
οὐδέ τι οἶδα,
ἥ μοι ἔτ' ἔμπεδόν ἐστι, γύναι, λέχος, ἥέ τις ἦδη
ἀνδρῶν ἄλλοσε θῆκε

Odysseus underscores this disbelief by repeating vocabulary: τίς ≈ τις, ἄλλοσε, θῆκε, and λέχος.

Further, like mythological paradigmata, the images we will examine in this study are shaped to help the speakers accomplish their goals. This shaping becomes apparent when we contrast the imagery of the speakers to similar images in the rest of the Homeric corpus. This “spin,” is most dramatic in our first test case. We shall argue in the next chapter that Achilles uses the image of the mutilated tree for his oath that he will never fight for the Achaeans again to criticize Agamemnon for his bad leadership and warn the Achaeans of their immanent deaths in direct contrast to the narrator who uses tree-felling similes to praise the Achaeans and celebrate their heroic achievement. The unexpected reversal of an image of praise into an image for invective shows the poet at his most creative and emphatically impresses the importance of

Achilles' withdrawal upon the plot of the entire poem. In Chapter 3 we will show how Glaucus plays up the essential fragility of leaves in order to save his life when he comes face to face with Diomedes. In the narrative, by contrast, leaves symbolize the health and vigor of the trees to which they are attached. Chapter 3 forms a companion piece with Chapter 2 because we show how men-as-tree likenesses picture warriors as formidably powerful opponents while men-as-leaves likenesses conceive of men as fragile and suggest that their efforts to secure immortality through heroic achievement are ultimately futile. As a pair, these chapters show how different kinds of plant imagery convey opposite theses about the nature of heroism.

If Chapters 2 and 3 form a "death-diptych," then Chapters 4 and 5 together take marriage as their theme. In Chapter 4 we show how Odysseus' recollection of the Delian palm carefully adapts the imagery of epithalamic poetry in order to capture Nausicaa's interest and win her sympathy in order that Odysseus will win a passage home to Ithaca from Alcinous and Arete. Odysseus' appeal is particularly subtle because the situation requires him to speak of the marriageability and beauty of Nausicaa without nominating himself as the lucky groom. He achieves his goal by choosing an image—the palm—that connotes Nausicaa's strength and independence as much as her grace and by calling her a sapling and a shoot, which is imagery the Homeric narrator regularly uses to represent children (not brides). At the end of his supplication to Nausicaa, Odysseus, probably with Penelope in mind, speaks of the excellence of a compatible union between husband and wife (*Od.* 6.180-185). The endurance of this union is brought to symbolic life in Odysseus' remembrance of crafting his marriage-bed out of the olive tree (*Od.* 23.183-204), the subject of the fifth chapter. This tree embodies the strength of Odysseus and Penelope's marriage, drawing on the inherent endurance of the rooted tree.

Odysseus's story of crafting his bedstead also offers an opposite view of craftsmanship

than we find in Achilles' oath on the scepter. Homer's attitude towards craftsmanship proves to be complex, therefore. While Chapter 2 shows the dark side of craftsmanship, where, in order to create something enduring from a tree, the craftsman must kill the tree. On this view the crafted object loses the vigorous energy of the tree and with it loses some of its value. Yet Odysseus' bedpost retains the vigorous energy of the tree that keeps Odysseus and Penelope's marriage alive. Although Odysseus has transformed the living tree into an object of culture, by means of his careful carpentry, Odysseus does not uproot (and therefore obliterate) the tree. On this view it is as though Odysseus "solves" the problem that craftsmanship presents by preserving the vital energy from the living tree and channeling it into his own home.

In sum, then, focusing on the relationship between tree similes in speech and tree similes in narrative offers a unique opportunity to apprehend clearly the full range of symbolic meaning encoded by the poet in trees.

Chapter 2: The Life and Death of Agamemnon's Scepter

At the most heated moment in the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon in Book 1 of the *Iliad*, the Myrmidon king suppresses an impulse to kill Agamemnon; instead he follows Athena's advice to criticize Agamemnon as forcefully as he can (*Il.* 1.225-246):

οἶνοβαρές, κυνὸς ὄμματ' ἔχων, κραδίην δ' ἐλάφοιο,	225
οὔτε ποτ' ἐς πόλεμον ἅμα λαῶι θωρηχθῆναι	
οὔτε λόχονδ' ἵεναι σὺν ἀριστήεσσιν Ἀχαιῶν	
τέτληκας θυμῶι· τὸ δέ τοι κῆρ εἶδεται εἶναι.	
ἢ πολὺ λῴϊόν ἐστι κατὰ στρατὸν εὐρὺν Ἀχαιῶν	
δῶρ' ἀποαιρεῖσθαι, ὅς τις σέθεν ἀντίον εἶπηι.	230
δημοβόρος βασιλεύς, ἐπεὶ οὔτιδανοῖσιν ἀνάσσεις·	
ἢ γάρ ἄν, Ἀτρεΐδῃ, νῦν ὕστατα λωβήσαιο.	
ἀλλ' ἔκ τοι ἐρέω καὶ ἐπὶ μέγαν ὄρκον ὁμοῦμαι--	
ναὶ μὰ τόδε σκῆπτρον· τὸ μὲν οὐ ποτε φύλλα καὶ ὄζους	
φύσει, ἐπεὶ δὴ πρῶτα τομήν ἐν ὄρεσσι λέλοιπεν,	235
οὔδ' ἀναθηλήσει· περὶ γάρ ῥά ἐ χαλκὸς ἔλεψεν	
φύλλά τε καὶ φλοιόν· νῦν αὐτέ μιν νῖες Ἀχαιῶν	
ἐν παλάμῃς φορέουσι δικασπόλοι, οἳ τε θέμιστας	
πρὸς Διὸς εἰρύαται· ὃ δέ τοι μέγας ἔσσεται ὄρκος--	
ἢ ποτ' Ἀχιλλῆος ποθὴ ἵξεται νῖας Ἀχαιῶν	240
σύμπαντας· τότε δ' οὐ τι δυνήσεται ἀχνύμενος περ	
χραιοσκεῖν, εὐτ' ἂν πολλοὶ ὑφ' Ἑκτορος ἀνδροφόνιοι	
θνήσκοντες πίπτωσι· σὺ δ' ἐνδοθὶ θυμὸν ἀμύξεις	
χωόμενος, ὃ τ' ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισας.	
ὥς φάτο Πηλεΐδης, ποτὶ δέ σκῆπτρον βάλε γαίῃ	245
χρυσείοις ἥλοισι πεπαρμένον, ἔζετο δ' αὐτός·	

“You drunk, who have the eyes of a dog, and the heart of a fawn,
never have you dared with your spirit to don your breastplate for war
together with the common soldiers; this appears to you to be your doom.
It is much better for you to rob gifts
of whoever throughout the broad army speaks against you.
You people-devouring king, since you are lord over weaklings;
otherwise, son of Atreus, you would now be committing your last outrage.
But I will speak out and swear a great oath:
by this scepter, which will never grow leaves and shoots,
since it left its stump in the mountains,
and it will not bloom again; for the bronze stripped it of its
leaves and bark: now in turn the sons of the Achaeans,
the marshals, carry it in their hands, who protect the ordinances
of Zeus, and it will be a great oath:
a longing for Achilles will at some time come upon the sons of the Achaeans,
all of them; and you will not at all be able to protect them, grieved though
you will be, when many fall dead at the hands of man-murdering Hector;
and you will tear the heart inside you,
angered that you paid no honor to the best of the Achaeans.”

So spoke the son of Peleus, and he threw the scepter to the earth,
studded with golden nails, and he sat down.

In this speech's middle Achilles begins an excursus on the scepter, the linchpin of his rhetorical strategy. It is ringed, for greater emphasis, by the phrases *καὶ ἐπὶ μέγαν ὄρκον ὁμοῦμαι* (233) and *ὃ δέ τοι μέγας ἔσσεται ὄρκος* (239).¹ I will concentrate in this chapter on interpreting the imagery of 1.234-239 because it is so unusual. In the first place, this speech is the only passage in Homer where the scepter is described as wooden (elsewhere it is regularly called golden). A second, subtler, departure from the narrator's standard practice occurs when Achilles describes the scepter as the product of a mutilated tree. Because the motif of tree felling occurs regularly in the narrator's battlefield similes likening vanquished warriors to falling trees, we are compelled to investigate what could link the life and death of the scepter with the life and death of a doomed soldier. While the image itself is strikingly elaborate, the fact that Achilles voices it is not as surprising as its message.² The second departure from the narrator's standard practice consists in the fact that Achilles creates a quasi-tree simile that undermines Agamemnon's royal authority whereas the narrator uses tree similes in the battle narrative to celebrate the martial success of the Achaeans. An audience alert to the conventional form and function of tree similes will understand that Achilles manipulates traditional imagery of praise to articulate criticism of Agamemnon, sentiments that run squarely counter to the feelings of the narrator. With this startling reversal, the poet punctuates the most dramatic moment of the quarrel, and Achilles

¹ On the importance of ring-composition, see Ch. 1 above, pp. 35-36.

² As we pointed out in Ch. 1 (pp. 3-4), Homeric characters regularly use the imagery of the natural world in rhetorically charged moments to bolster their arguments.

accomplishes a rhetorical tour de force by using imagery designed for praise to blame Agamemnon.³

Achilles creatively uses the scepter, a symbol of justice and authority, to declare emphatically that Agamemnon is committing an injustice by stealing Briseis. Throughout his speech Achilles envisions Agamemnon's injustice as a force of separation that ruins social cohesion. He accuses Agamemnon of separating himself from the soldiers below his social station in war (226) and from his peers in ambush (227). Agamemnon also separates the Achaeans from their duly awarded honors (229-230). The anaphora of οὐτε in 226-227 and the prepositions ἄμα (226) and σύν (227) as well as the verbal prefix ἀπο- in ἀποαιρεῖσθαι (230) announce and underline this theme. And so, to counter Agamemnon's injustice, Achilles will effect a separation of his own. He declares that he will separate himself from the sons of the Achaeans (1.240) and threatens that the Achaean will feel his absence acutely (Ἀχιλλῆος ποθὴ ἵξεται νῆας Ἀχαιῶν, 240).⁴

Achilles' excursus on the scepter also explicitly expresses this notion of separation. The bronze strips the living tree of leaves and bark, which it can never replace (1.234-235). Achilles

³ In Ch. 1 we reviewed recent scholarship on the "poetic" quality of Achilles' language, including Martin's discussion of how the language of Achilles supersedes conventional Homeric language (pp. 24-25). Martin's focus in *The Language of Heroes* rested on Achilles' reshaping and "stretching" of formulas. Here I mean to extend this discussion to Achilles' creative manipulation of conventional imagery.

⁴ Once Achilles has made his break, however, it is he, not Agamemnon, who feels wrath (αὐτὰρ ὁ μήνιε νηυσί [Achilles], 1.488 ≈ Ἀτρείδης δ' ἐτέρωθεν ἐμήνιε [Agamemnon], 1.247) which destroys his heart (ἀλλὰ φθινύθεσκε φίλον κῆρ, 1.491 ≈ σὺ δ' ἔνδοθι θυμὸν ἀμύξεις, 1.243), and suffers painful longing for battle (ποθέεσκε δ' αὐτὴν τε πτόλεμόν τε, 1.492 ≈ Ἀχιλλῆος ποθὴ ἵξεται νῆας Ἀχαιῶν, 1.240). While Achilles rages at Agamemnon (ἀπομηνίσας, 2.772), it is his own Myrmidons who feel his absence most keenly (2.778-779): οἱ δ' ἀρχὸν ἀρηϊφίλον ποθέοντες / φοίτων ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα κατὰ στρατόν, οὐδ' ἐμάχοντο "[the Myrmidons], longing for their war-loving leader went about this way and that through the army, and they did not fight." Once Patroclus is killed, Achilles feels longing for him, too (19.321, 24.6).

conceives of the mutilation of the tree as an act of unproductive violence that kills the tree and strips the scepter of its symbolic power. Achilles' description of judicial procedure (237-239), which in other circumstances would create a picture of just kingship (as on the Shield of Achilles, on which see below, pp. 60-62), rings hollow after Achilles details the mutilation of the tree. Stripped of his authority, just as the tree has been stripped of leaves and life, Agamemnon will be powerless in the crisis that will follow on Achilles' departure (*οὐ τι δυνήσεται*, 241), just as the scepter is now unable to prevent Agamemnon from acting unjustly and has no power to ensure that Agamemnon pays Achilles the honor due to him (244). In a clever piece of irony, Achilles uses the scepter to invest with solemn power his complaint that the scepter has lost that very power.

The dead tree from which the now-useless scepter has been made can, therefore, stand for Agamemnon because, just as the scepter is powerless, so too will Agamemnon be powerless in the future while Achilles is absent.⁵ At the same time, this tree can also be read as a symbol for the Achaean soldiers. Achilles tells Agamemnon that his actions will cause the death of Achaeans later (Achilles makes this threat explicit at 1.242-243: *εὖτ' ἂν πολλοὶ ὑφ' Ἑκτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο / θνήσκοντες πίπτωσι*). And indeed the image of the cut tree evokes scenes of death. Achilles' excursus hints that the Achaeans will die in a way similar to the way the scepter was made from the death of a tree: the Trojans, led by man-murdering Hector (242) will cut them down like trees. Achilles conjures this conventional image from the similes illustrating death on the battlefield (which the audience will see play out repeatedly later in the poem), in which Achaeans kill Trojans just as woodcutters chop down trees in order to manufacture products of wood. But here Achilles turns the narrator's convention upside down. Achilles

⁵ Agamemnon is a "lord of good-for-nothings" (*οὐ τιδανοῖσιν ἀνάσσεις*, 1.231).

implies that the Trojans will play the woodcutters and the Achaeans the helpless trees when Achilles does not fight.

EVERYTHING GOLD CAN STAY: METAL AND WOOD IN HOMER

We began by asserting that Achilles departs from the narrator's standard practice when he says that the scepter is made of wood rather than of metal, as the narrator typically does. Lest we think that the difference between a wooden or golden scepter is a minor detail, we can appreciate the larger thematic importance riding on the scepter's manufacture by comparing Achilles' outburst in *Iliad* 1 with the Ithacan assembly in *Odyssey* Book 2—the Homeric passage that most closely resembles it—at which Telemachus casts down a scepter in a moment of desperate frustration.

A comparison of the two “throwing” passages is instructive. First Achilles (*Il.* 1.245-246), then Telemachus (*Od.* 2.80-81):

ὥς φάτο Πηλεΐδης, ποτὶ δὲ σκῆπτρον βάλε γαίῃ
χρυσείοις ἥλοισι πεπαρμένον, ἔξετο δ' αὐτός·

So spoke the son of Peleus, and he cast the scepter to the earth,
studded with golden nails, and he sat down.

ὥς φάτο χωόμενος, ποτὶ δὲ σκῆπτρον βάλε γαίῃ,
δάκρυ' ἀναπρήσας· οἶκτος δ' ἔλε λαὸν ἅπαντα.

So spoke [Telemachus] angrily, and he cast the scepter to the earth,
bursting into tears; and pity gripped the whole people.

The half line that describes the casting of the scepters is identical in both passages. The passages also overlap in their diction and theme. For example, before casting his scepter to the ground Telemachus had invoked Themis as the guardian of assemblies, just as Achilles speaks of order in his excursus:

οἳ τε θέμιστας / πρὸς Διὸς εἰρύεται (*Il.* 1.238-39)

[The marshals], who protect the ordinances of Zeus

λίσσομαι ἡμὲν Ζηνὸς Ὀλυμπίου ἠδὲ Θέμιστος (*Od.* 2.68)

I supplicate Olympian Zeus and Themis.

Furthermore, themes of excessive and improper eating and drinking are explicit in the *Odyssey* (2.55-58):

βοῦς ἱερεύοντες καὶ ὄϊς καὶ πίονας αἶγας,
εἰλαπινάζουσιν πίνουσί τε αἶθοπα οἶνον
μαψιδίως·

[The suitors] coming frequently to our house every day,
slaughtering oxen and sheep and fat goats,
feast and drink up the shining wine to no purpose.

Just as Achilles attacks Agamemnon for being a drunk (οἶνοβαρές, 1.225) and a devourer of the people (δημοβόρος, 1.231), Telemachus indicts the suitors for the similar transgressions of overeating and overdrinking. The good leader who rightly holds the scepter must work cooperatively with his whole community and not greedily consume resources, as we shall see below (pp. 60-67). Finally, Telemachus, like Achilles, speaks of recompense in his speech (τάχ' ἄν ποτε καὶ τίσις εἴη, 2.76 corresponding to ὃ τ' ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισας, *Il.* 1.244).⁶

There are also, however, significant differences between these two scenes. *Il.* 1.245 differs from *Od.* 2.80 only in the second foot of the verse where the *Iliad* names Achilles by his patronymic (Πηλείδης) while the *Odyssey* refers to Telemachus with a participle of equivalent metrical value that denotes his emotional state (χωόμενος). This difference proves significant. Emotionalism makes its presence felt much more in the *Odyssey* passage than in the *Iliad*. The second line of the *Odyssey* passage deals with Telemachus' tears and the pity which Telemachus' audience feels at his plight. Telemachus, probably because he is a young man without the life

⁶ The way in which Homer describes the summoning of the Ithacan assembly parallels the assembly in Book 2 of the *Iliad* in which the scepter plays such an important part. Telemachus, like Agamemnon at the beginning of Book 2 of the *Iliad*, dresses for counsel (*Od.* 2.2-5; *Il.* 2.42-47) and calls the heralds to assembly (*Od.* 2.6-8 = *Il.* 2.50-52).

experience to control his feelings, makes more of an outward show of his feelings than does Achilles.

The *Odyssey*'s assembly scene gives play to Telemachus and his audience's emotions. The *Iliad*, by contrast, plays up the materiality of the scepter. The first four feet of verse 246 (χρυσείοις ἥλοισι πεπαρμένον) give the most precise description of the scepter's physical design in the two poems. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, therefore, present two versions of an assembly scene, and we find close similarities between them in their diction and, to a large extent, in their theme. The comparison between these scenes ultimately shows how important the physical design of the scepter is to the *Iliad* passage.

It is revealing that after Achilles stops speaking, the narrator says that the scepter is studded with golden nails. The narrator takes pains to fill out Achilles' deliberately partial description, to explain Achilles' bold innovation and to reconcile it with his own practice. For the most part the poet takes but little interest in describing the scepter as a physical object.⁷ Indeed, of the thirty-three instances in which the word σκήπτρον appears in Homer, in a majority of the passages (twenty-one) the word receives no description whatsoever.⁸ In a few of the Iliadic passages the scepter verges on becoming merely a symbol, or more properly, a metonym, for abstract notions like justice or authority:

σκήπτρῳι μὲν τοι δῶκε τετιμῆσθαι περὶ πάντων [Diomedes speaks]

Zeus granted that you [Agamemnon] be honored most of all men with the scepter. (9.38)

⁷ That Homer dwells not on the details of the scepter's physical appearance but on the story of its creation, whether by Achaean woodcutters in Book 1 or by Hephaestus in Book 2, and on its transmission through the generations (i.e. its political history) is evidence for Lessing (1984 [1766]: Ch. 16) of his claim that Homer does not describe objects statically but instead only narrates actions one after another, line by line.

⁸ *Il.* 1.28, 2.199, 2.265, 2.279, 3.218, 7.227, 7.412, 9.38, 9.96, 9.156, 9.298, 10.321, 10.328, 18.505, 18.557; *Od.* 2.38, 2.80, 3.412, 13.437, 14.31, 18.103.

οὐνεκα πολλῶν
λαῶν ἐσσι ἄναξ καὶ τοι Ζεὺς ἐγγυάλιξεν
σκήπτρόν τ' ἡδὲ θέμιστας, ἵνα σφισι βουλευήσθῃ. [Nestor speaks]

Because you [Agamemnon] are lord of many men
and Zeus bestowed to you the scepter and ordinances in order that you counsel
with them. (9.97-99)

οἳ κέ ἐ δωτίνησι θεὸν ὥς τιμήσουσιν
καὶ οἱ ὑπὸ σκήπτρῳ λιπαρὰς τελέουσιν θέμιστας. [Agamemnon speaks]

The [Pylia] who will honor [Achilles] like a god with gifts
and they will accomplish his fair ordinances under his scepter. (9.155-6)

In the first quoted passage (9.38), Diomedes need not be referring to a real scepter present in the meeting of the Achaean counselors but rather to the authority with which Zeus has vested Agamemnon.⁹ Similarly, the scepter is paired with the abstract notion *θέμιστες* in the other passages and so in these passages the physicality of the scepter is downplayed: the word *σκήπτρον*, rather, makes vivid an abstract idea of good governance and prudent judgment.

Even when Homer modifies *σκήπτρον* with an adjective, the adjective does not always describe the scepter's appearance. For example, Eumaeus gives the disguised Odysseus a scepter which is *θυμαρές* "fitted to his needs" (*Od.* 17.199). The scepter which Agamemnon brings to assembly in Book 2 of the *Iliad* receives the formula *ἄφθιτον αἰεὶ* "always imperishable" and is designated as belonging to his father *πατρώϊον* (2.45, 2.186).¹⁰ This phrase expresses a notion exactly opposite to that of Achilles' speech: where Achilles aims to kill the scepter by connecting it to the dead tree, the narrator rejects the notion that the scepter can decay.

⁹ In a similar way the epithet *σκηπτουῆχος* in the formula *σκηπτουῆχοι βασιλῆες* "scepter-bearing kings" invests kings with political authority derived from Zeus (Mackie, 1996: 25-26).

¹⁰ According to Nagy (1999 [1979]: 179), the phrase *ἄφθιτον αἰεὶ* designates the scepter as a metallic, not a vegetal object.

When the narrator does describe the scepter as a physical object, he regularly describes it as golden.¹¹ The scepters belonging to Chryses (*Il.* 1.15, 1.374), Agamemnon (*Il.* 2.268), Minos (*Od.* 11.569), and Teiresias (*Od.* 11.91) are made of gold (χρύσεος). In addition, as we have already said, the scepter on which Achilles swears his oath is pierced with golden nails (χρυσείοις ἥλοισι πεπαρμένον, *Il.* 1.246).¹² Based on the specificity of this passage and on the archaeological record, we may conclude that the epithet “golden,” means that the scepter is decorated with gold, not made entirely of gold.¹³ The poet, then, does not allow his narrator to call attention to the fact that the scepter has a wooden core. But the fact that scepters are made of both wood and gold lends them the power to be multivalent poetic symbols, an ambiguity which the poet of the *Iliad* exploits.

The narrator, then, associates Agamemnon’s scepter in Book 2 with metal. We get a good sense of the thematic associations evoked by the metal scepter by looking closely at the narrator’s descriptions of it. For the narrator, the scepter embodies the stability of the aristocratic

¹¹ Homer uses the adjective παχύ “thick” once, to describe Hephaestus’ σκῆπτρον (*Il.* 18.416).

¹² Here, Becker (1995: 53) sees Homer’s concern with actions in time: “This participial phrase [χρυσείοις ἥλοισι πεπαρμένον] assures that the action of the *artifex* is part of the picture.”

¹³ Among his finds at Mycenae, Schliemann found in Grave Circle A Shaft Grave IV the golden sheath for a wooden scepter with a crystal handle in the shape of a dragon’s head (Schliemann, 2010 [1878]: 286-288). For discussion of these and later finds at Mycenae, including a gold scepter sheath riveted to its wooden core by bronze nails, see Tsountas and Manatt (1897: 167-169). Dickinson (1977: 84) provides a more recent synthesis: “evidence for a class of ceremonial staffs, presumably used to signify rank or office: again, the earliest examples come from the Shaft Graves...are likely to be the antecedents of objects like the Kourion scepter, though the intermediaries have not been found.” The Kourion Scepter, which possibly dates to 1100 BCE (but for doubts about the date, see Goring, 1995: 106), is, similarly, a cylinder of enameled gold. On scepters as a symbol of Mycenaean kingship, see Kilian (1988: 294) and Palaima (1995). For a survey of scepters in the archaeological record from the Minoans to Vergina, see Unruh, with references to earlier bibliography (2011: 288, n. 20).

House of Atreus over time. In one case, the narrator gives an account of the manufacture of Agamemnon's scepter that contradicts that offered by Achilles (*Il.* 2.100-108):¹⁴

ἔστη σκῆπτρον ἔχων· τὸ μὲν Ἥφαιστος κάμε τεύχων· Ἥφαιστος μὲν δῶκε Διὶ Κρονίωνι ἄνακτι, αὐτὰρ ἄρα Ζεὺς δῶκε διακτόρῳ Ἀργειφόντῃ, Ἑρμείας δὲ ἄναξ δῶκεν Πέλοπι πληξίππῳ, αὐτὰρ ὃ αὐτὲ Πέλοψ δῶκ' Ἀτρεΐ ποιμένι λαῶν· Ἀτρεὺς δὲ θνήσκων ἔλιπεν πολύαρνι Θυέστῃ, αὐτὰρ ὃ αὐτὲ Θυέστ' Ἀγαμέμνονι λείπε φορῆναι, πολλῇσιν νήσοισι καὶ Ἀργεῖ παντὶ ἀνάσσειν.	100 105
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And powerful Agamemnon stood up, holding the scepter, which
Hephaestus fashioned, and Hephaestus gave it to lord Zeus the son of Cronus,
and Zeus gave it to the runner Argeiphontes,
and lord Hermes gave it to the horse-driver Pelops,
and then Pelops gave it to Atreus, shepherd of the people;
and Atreus, when he died, left it to Thyestes rich in sheepflocks,
then Thyestes left it for Agamemnon to wield,
to be lord over many islands and all of Argos.

That Hephaestus, the blacksmith god, fashions the scepter in Book 2, just as he, later, forges armor for Achilles (*Il.* 18.478-607) and constructs bronze-floored palaces for the immortals, associates the scepter with metal.¹⁵ The metal scepter is handed down from king to king in an orderly and stable sequence (reinforced poetically by the repetition of δῶκε) that symbolizes the

¹⁴ In my view the two origin stories for the scepters in Books 1 and 2 differ from each other for thematic reasons, not because they are different scepters. Easterling (1989: 114), citing the diametrically opposed conclusions of Nagy (1999 [1979]) and Griffin (1980), considers it impossible to determine whether Achilles holds Agamemnon's scepter in Book 1 and finds what the scepter symbolizes a more important question. Van Wees (1992: 408, n. 11) implies that Easterling goes too far to suggest we should not ask how the scepter was really used. It may be that the scepter in Book 1 is not the same as the scepter in Book 2, but whether or not the scepters are the same or different does not matter to my argument. What is more important to me is that they are of the same make: a gold tube surrounding a wooden core.

¹⁵ Homer says that Hephaestus builds the homes of the gods at *Il.* 1.607-608. Zeus' palace has a floor of bronze (Διὸς ποτὶ χαλκοβατὲς δῶ: *Il.* 1.426, 14.173, 21.438, 505), as does Hephaestus' own house (*Od.* 8.321). The epithet also once in the *Odyssey* describes Alcinous' palace (13.4).

smooth succession of power from generation to generation.¹⁶ Generations of mortals live and die while the deathless scepter remains unchanged. The diction, particularly the epithets, associate the scepter with power and wealth: *κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων, Κρονίωνι ἄνακτι, Πέλοπι πληξίππῳ, Ἀτρεΐ ποιμένι λαῶν, πολύαρνι Θυέστῃ, Ἑρμείας δὲ ἄναξ*, and the verb *ἀνάσσειν*.

This is the scepter with which Agamemnon arms himself, so to speak, before he goes to counsel (2.41-46):

ἔγρετο δ' ἐξ ὕπνου, θείῃ δέ μιν ἀμφέχυντ' ὀμφή·
 ἔζετο δ' ὀρθωθείς, μαλακὸν δ' ἔνδυνε χιτῶνα,
 καλὸν νηγάτεον, περὶ δὲ μέγα βάλλετο φᾶρος,
 ποσσὶ δ' ὑπο λιπαροῖσιν ἐδήσατο καλὰ πέδιλα,
 ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' ὤμοισιν βάλετο ξίφος ἀργυρόηλον,
 εἶλετο δὲ σκῆπτρον πατρώϊον, ἀφθιτον αἰεὶ·
 σὺν τῷ ἔβη κατὰ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων.

And [Agamemnon] rose from sleep, and the divine voice poured around him;
 and he sat up straight, and put on a soft cloak,
 beautiful and new-made, and he threw around himself a big mantle,
 and he bound fine sandals under his soft feet,
 and he threw around his shoulders his silver-studded sword,
 and he picked up his father's scepter, always imperishable;
 with this he went through the ships of the bronze-armored Achaeans.

Agamemnon's metal scepter is pictured here as a weapon, paratactically connected to the sword,¹⁷ and later to be wielded against unruly soldiers (2.198-199) and Thersites (2.265-269).

The whole passage echoes arming scenes in the rest of the *Iliad*.¹⁸ Now *Il.* 2.41-46 is not a particularly close variant of the scenes Armstrong interprets in his classic article on arming scenes because it lacks the three line arming “leitmotiv,” (e.g. *Il.* 3.330-332) and we do not find

¹⁶ Indeed, it may be that Homer suppressed the gory details of the succession through the House of Atreus in order to play up this theme here (Kirk, 1985 *ad.* 2.101-108).

¹⁷ The epithet for Agamemnon's sword, *ἀργυρόηλον* “silver-studded,” here echoes the narrator's phrase for the scepter in Book 1 at 246, *χρυσείοις ἥλοισι πεπαρμένον*.

¹⁸ Cf. Latacz (2010: 23 *ad* 42-7. On arming scenes as a type-scene, see Armstrong (1958).

the sequence breastplate, sword, shield, helmet, spear (Armstrong, 1958: 344) because Agamemnon is not going into battle at this point in the story. Still, in Book 2 Homer presents a sequence of five articles (cloak, mantle, sandals, sword, scepter) that corresponds to the five articles of an arming scene. Homer does use most of the same verbs here as he does in arming scenes (*δύνω*, *βάλλω*, and *αἰρέω*, *βαίνω*). *εἵλετο* is Homer's verb of choice for scepter and for spear,¹⁹ and, just as the spear comes last in an arming scene, so, too, does the scepter come last in Book 2. There are particular overlaps in diction between Agamemnon's dressing scene in Book 2 and Achilles' arming scene at the end of Book 19. Both Agamemnon's scepter and Achilles' spear are *πατρώϊον* "paternal." Also, Homer says in Book 19 that Hephaestus manufactured his armor using the same formula as he used to describe the manufacture of Agamemnon's scepter (*{τά οἱ Ἥφαιστος κάμε τεύχων}*, 19.368 and *τὸ μὲν Ἥφαιστος κάμε τεύχων*, 2.101). These overlaps between Agamemnon's dressing scene and arming scenes bring Agamemnon's scepter into the world of weapons.

If, therefore, Achilles followed the narrator's lead and cast the scepter as an object of metal in his speech, he would have attributed entirely too much power and stability to the scepter. These are precisely the themes Achilles wants to avoid. So Achilles adopts the opposite strategy, boldly defying the narrator, by stripping the scepter of its metallic associations and replacing them with the more fragile resonances of the world of wood and trees.

THE SYMBOLIC RESONANCES OF THE HOMERIC SCEPTER

Here we shall lay the groundwork for the claim that the poet manipulates the details of tree similes of the battle narrative to create Achilles' excursus on the scepter's manufacture. Our

¹⁹ Compare *εἵλετο δὲ σκῆπτρον πατρώϊον, ἄφθιτον αἰεὶ* (Agamemnon dressing: 2.46) with *εἵλετο δ' ἄλκιμον ἔγχος, ὃ οἱ παλάμηφιν ἀρήρει* (Paris: 3.338), *εἵλετο δ' ἄλκιμα δοῦρε δύω, κεκορυθμένα χαλκῶι* (Agamemnon arming: 11.43), *εἵλετο δ' ἄλκιμα δοῦρε, τά οἱ παλάμηφιν ἀρήρει* (Patroclus: 16.139), and *ἐκ δ' ἄρα σύριγγος πατρώϊον ἐσπάσατ' ἔγχος* (Achilles: 19.387).

review of the scholarship on the scepter will show how scholars have judged that Achilles' speech foreshadows the larger themes of the epic. As we will see, the scene as a whole, read in context, plays like a battle scene and therefore anticipates the battle narrative. In such a context it is no surprise to find that the picture Achilles creates of the scepter is a variation on the tree similes that play such an iconic role in the battle narrative.

Returning to the oath itself (1.233-239), we may make a few additional observations about the language:

ἀλλ' ἔκ τοι ἔρέω καὶ ἐπὶ μέγαν ὄρκον ὁμοῦμαι--
ναὶ μὰ τόδε σκῆπτρον· τὸ μὲν οὐ ποτε φύλλα καὶ ὄζους
φύσει, ἐπεὶ δὴ πρῶτα τομῇν ἐν ὄρεσσι λέλοιπεν,
οὐδ' ἀναθελήσει· περὶ γὰρ ῥά ἐ χαλκῶς ἔλεψεν
φύλλά τε καὶ φλοιόν· νῦν αὐτέ μιν νῖες Ἀχαιῶν
ἐν παλάμῃς φορέουσι δικασπόλοι, οἳ τε θέμιστας
πρὸς Διὸς εἰρύεται· ὃ δέ τοι μέγας ἔσσεται ὄρκος—

But I will speak out and swear a great oath:
by this scepter, which will never grow leaves and shoots,
since it left its stump in the mountains,
and it will not bloom again; for the bronze stripped it of its
leaves and bark: now in turn the sons of the Achaeans,
the marshals carry it in their hands, who protect the ordinances
of Zeus, and it will be a great oath.

The creation of the scepter results from the death of a tree. Interestingly, Achilles uses no word for “tree” in this passage (whether δένδρεον or any specific species of tree, as we find in similes) but does refer to all the tree's disparate parts: trunk, leaves, branches, bark.²⁰ The question immediately arises: why does Achilles remove the scepter from the manufactured world of metallic weapons, to which the scepter belongs more naturally in Homer, as we have shown, and

²⁰ According to Snell (1982 [1953]: 5-8), Homer has no word for the living human body but speaks instead of its parts like limbs (μέλη, γυῖα, ῥέθρα) or skin (χρῶς). For trenchant criticisms of this thesis, and the assertion that Homer's characters did have a notion of the body as a whole, see Williams (1993: 21-49). Perhaps by speaking of this tree's parts and not using a word for the whole tree, Achilles means to declare that the tree is a metaphorical body.

introduce instead the novel idea that the scepter is a product of wood and the result of the death of a tree?

Scholars have interpreted Achilles' oath and the place of the scepter in it from different angles. Some scholars (Benardete, Griffin, Mondi) have concentrated on how the scepter represents justice and argue that Achilles subverts this system of justice when he casts the scepter to the earth.²¹ Such readings mainly focus on our scene in Book 1 and deal with how the scepter is a tangible symbol of an abstract idea of justice. Other scholars offer readings that link the themes of this scene to larger motifs of our *Iliad*. Easterling (1989), for example, like Benardete, Griffin, and Mondi, is concerned with the connection between the scepter and justice, but she approaches the question by comparing how different characters in different scenes wield the scepter.²² Such readings have productively explored the ideological underpinnings of the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon but do not deal with imagery. Nagy (1999 [1979]: 179-180), on the other hand, in an influential reading, connects the substance of the oath with its imagery: just as the scepter can never again belong to the natural world from which it has been severed, so Achilles can never again belong to the Achaean confederation.²³ For Nagy it is

²¹ According to Benardete (1963: 15) the scepter "los[es] all its force as soon as he [Achilles] casts it aside. Though 'studded with golden nails', he holds it in no esteem. Any branch at all would serve him as well." Griffin (1980: 11-12) articulates the force of Achilles' final dismissive gesture: "By doing so [flinging the scepter to the ground] he gives vivid form to his rejection of his whole position among the Achaeans. The scepter is to be held by those who administer justice: he is suffering injustice. It is the symbol of the community and its sanctities: he rejects the community and withdraws from it to his own ships." Mondi (1980) by contrast argues that Achilles' gesture is not meant to reject "the authority vested in the **skêptron** (which presumably is his own), but rather he is emphatically affirming it. The **skêptron** is hurled to earth as a demonstration of royal anger."

²² Benardete and Griffin do briefly compare the use of the scepter in Book 1 with Book 2, but that is not the focus of their studies.

²³ Watkins (1994 [1975]: 531-532) notes the ambiguous place the scepter occupies between realms of nature and human culture.

precisely the vegetal imagery in the oath that gives Achilles' promise its increased rhetorical impact: just as the scepter cannot become a living tree again, Achilles guarantees that longing and death will come upon the sons of the Achaeans and Agamemnon.²⁴

Scholars have frequently seen Achilles' speech in Book 1 as a paradigmatic or programmatic scene to which Homer connects other scenes. Nagy (1999 [1979]) uses the imagery in the oath to construct an argument that the life and death of heroes is a fundamentally natural, specifically vegetal, process of growth, brief flourishing, and decay, but he does not examine specific connections between Achilles' oath and tree similes. Lowenstam (1993) also reads the quarrel as programmatic as he, in his second chapter, traces the recurring elements of imagery and language throughout the epic. Schein (1984) connects the scepter closely with Achilles' life story: "This scepter is emblematic of Achilles' essential nature both as a force that destroys blooming life rooted in nature and as a life so destroyed" (96). He justifies the second part of this claim by quoting from Thetis' speech in Book 18 (54-60), in which she compares him to a shoot (ὃ δ' ἀνέδραμεν ἔρνεϊ ἴσος, 56). Schein's is a nice observation: according to him Achilles is unconsciously predicting not the Achaeans' nor Agamemnon's future but his own. To Schein, Achilles is an unstable mixture of *menis* (rage) and *philotes* (love) just as he commits destructive acts in the prime of his physical perfection.

To read the scepter by which Achilles swears his oath as a stand-in for Achilles himself uncovers an essential part of the speech's rhetoric and is itself a nice illustration of the *Iliad's* subtle and poem-wide artistry. Yet as Lynn-George (1993) eloquently expresses, the themes of this speech affect all the combatants of this poem, not only Achilles. Lynn-George studies Homer's fixation on defense by analyzing the use of the verb *χραιομεῖν* "to defend," and

²⁴ The theme of irreversibility in Achilles' oath also features in the discussions of Puhvel (1991) and West (1997) of our passage's possible connection to Hittite ritual texts.

especially how the *Iliad* dwells on the precarious position of vulnerable characters like the priest Chryses, those vanquished on the Homeric battlefield like Scamandrius, the hunter whom, Homer says, Artemis does not protect (*Il.* 5.49-54), and Priam. The scepter plays an important role in his argument because it regularly appears in passages with the verb *χραιομεῖν* because it is supposed to guarantee that whoever wields it is inviolate. In that Lynn-George sees the Achaean assembly in Book 1 as a model with which to interpret other scenes in the poem, particularly battle scenes (Lynn-George, 1993: 203-205), his approach resembles Schein's, Lowenstam's, and my own. Yet Lynn-George is less interested in defining precisely how Homer connects the assembly scene in Book 1 to the battle narrative; rather, he is concerned to articulate his conception of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless and what its ethical implications are.

G.S. Kirk (1985: *ad* 1.234-9) suggests a more precise and direct connection between Achilles' excursus and the world of the similes (and presumably he means tree-similes):

The development of detail in 235-7 (its being cut in the mountains, the bronze axe that trimmed it) resembles that of similes, and for some of the same reasons, for example emphasis and emotional force – but also to make the oath more impressive and exotic, and therefore more effective.

We shall spend most of the remainder of this chapter defining precisely how Achilles' excursus differs from a tree-simile and show how each has opposing rhetorical goals. While the narrator uses tree imagery to glorify the success of victorious Achaeans, Achilles uses similar imagery to excoriate Agamemnon. In the typical tree simile a woodcutter (who always stands for a victorious Achaean) fells a tree in order to make a useful object from the timber. As we will see, Achilles reverses the valence of this imagery by omitting reference to the craftsman, a move that invites an audience knowledgeable of these conventions to question the value and purpose of warfare (which is one of the *Iliad*'s most important large thematic obsessions).

The place of Achilles' speech in the narrative context of Book 1 is critical. The narrator tells us explicitly that Achilles' speech substitutes for physical violence. After Agamemnon declares that he will take back Briseis, anger rises in Achilles and a sudden impulse to kill Agamemnon on the spot with his sword grips him (*Il.* 1.188-192):

ὥς φάτο· Πηλείωνι δ' ἄχος γένετ', ἐν δέ οἱ ἦτορ
στήθεσσιν λασίοισι διάνδιχα μερμήριξεν,
ἦ' ὅ γε φάσγανον ὀξὺ ἐρυσσάμενος παρὰ μηροῦ
τοὺς μὲν ἀναστήσειεν, ὃ δ' Ἀτρεΐδην ἐναρίζοι,
ἦε χόλον παύσειεν ἐρητύσειέ τε θυμόν.

So Agamemnon spoke. And grief came upon the son of Peleus,
and the heart in his shaggy chest divided two ways,
whether he should draw his sharp sword from his thigh,
dismiss the assembly, and slay the son of Atreus,
or whether he should stop his anger and restrain his spirit.

Achilles opts for the second option, going so far as to start drawing his sword (194). Achilles is ready at this moment to do battle with Agamemnon. Indeed Achilles is about to dismiss the crowd, to turn the agora into a battlefield. To put it shortly, Homer begins to sound the notes of a specifically martial strain at this moment of the poem.²⁵

But Athena intervenes and frustrates Achilles' most belligerent impulses. In her speech the goddess persuades the fighter to whom, Agamemnon says, war, battle, and contention are ever dear (*αἰεὶ γάρ τοι ἔρις τε φίλη πόλεμοί τε μάχαι τε*, 1.177),²⁶ to use words instead (1.210-211):

ἄλλ' ἄγε λῆγ' ἔριδος, μὴδὲ ξίφος ἔλκεο χειρί,
ἄλλ' ἦτοι ἔπεςιν μὲν ὀνειδίσον, ὥς ἔσεταιί περ.

But come, let go of your contention, do not draw your sword with your hand,
but instead reproach Agamemnon with words, explaining what will happen.

²⁵ These martial undertones are foreshadowed even earlier when Homer describes the onset of the Achaean plague as an attack from the angered Apollo, armed with arrow and quiver (*Il.* 1.44-52).

²⁶ Cf. Alcinous' similar line about the Phaeacians' love of feasting and music (*Od.* 8.248-9).

Athena commands Achilles to abandon this strife (ἔρις) by which Agamemnon has defined his personality but Achilles clings fast to his anger (1.223-224):

Πηλείδης δ' ἐξαὖτις ἀταρτηροῖς ἐπέεσσιν
Ἀτρεΐδην προσέειπε, καὶ οὐ πῶ λῆγε χόλοιο·

And the son of Peleus right away addressed the son of Atreus
with baneful words, and did not yet let go of his anger.

The repetition of λῆγω in these passages connects the ideas of strife and anger and establishes that Achilles attacks with his speech instead of his sword. We should not be surprised, therefore, to find the language of the battlefield in Achilles' address to Agamemnon. Indeed Achilles puts the three remarkable lines about the death of the tree that creates the scepter into his oath in order to evoke the Iliadic battlefield. We may profitably think of Achilles' speech and the oath that grounds it as a one-sided duel of words with all the hallmarks of "flyting" speech.²⁷ Achilles borrows imagery that marks the death of heroes from the battle books in order to fight Agamemnon.

As we turn, then, to the oath itself, we may naturally ask in addition whose scepter it is and why Achilles is suddenly holding it. Homer does not mention the scepter in every speech of the poem nor does he explain here how Achilles came to hold it. Instead, Homer uses the scepter symbolically to mark special occasions in the poem as especially significant. As Combellack

²⁷ Martin (1989: 65-77) sets out the three elements of "flyting" speech, all of which are contained in the first eight lines of Achilles' speech. They are: first, an explicit rejection of physical violence in favor of abusive speech (67), secondly, a comparison of the target of abuse to a timid animal (69): κυνὸς ὄμματ' ἔχων, κραδίην δ' ἐλάφοιο "you who have the eyes of a dog and the heart of a fawn," *Il.* 1.225, thirdly, the contrast between idleness and action (70), exemplified in Book 1 when Achilles criticizes Agamemnon for his reluctance to join battle (*Il.* 1.226-228) and for his improper and excessive eating and drinking (δημοβόρος, 231; οἰνοβαρές, 225). Achilles' speech also contains features that distinguish flyting among companions. Achilles echoes Agamemnon's previous speech (*Il.* 1.173-187) with ἐπεὶ οὐτιδανοῖσιν ἀνάσσεις (231) and ὅς τις σέθεν ἀντίον εἶπηι (230), which correspond to Agamemnon's Μυρμιδόνεσσιν ἄνασσε (180) and στυγέηι δὲ καὶ ἄλλος / ἴσον ἐμοὶ φάσθαι καὶ ὁμοιωθήμεναι ἄντην (186-187) respectively. Achilles also makes mighty murderous Hector (Ἑκτορος ἀνδροφόνιοι, 242) a foil for powerless Agamemnon (οὐ τι δυνήσεται...χραιομεῖν, 242-243).

(1947/1948) has argued, the scepter appears at moments marked by “solemnity” (210), especially when characters criticize each other’s moral conduct or when oaths are sworn between characters who mistrust each other and use the scepter to ensure the validity of their promises. Jasper Griffin relies heavily on the scepter and the scenes featuring it in Book 1 and 2 to define his key terms *symbolic scene* and *significant object* (1980: 9-12). Because Homer deploys the scepter so sparingly, when it does appear, it produces a tangible poetic effect.

In order to judge what this poetic effect might be, scholars have sought to determine how the scepter was ordinarily used in Homeric society.²⁸ Kirk (1985 *ad Il.* 2.109) spells out no fewer than nine uses for staves in an analysis of the passages in which the words *σκήπτρον* and *σκηπάνιον* appear.²⁹ In order to simplify the picture, Kirk and others have categorized these passages into larger thematic groups, seeking to understand what one thing the scepter may symbolize in Homer. Kirk distinguishes religious and secular uses. Van Wees (1992: 276-280) gives the most elaborate argument and distinguishes three uses: scepters offer support for walking, mark the special status of priests, and symbolize the power of princes (Van Wees includes scepters used by speakers in assembly and wielded by heralds in the princely category).

How the scepter was used is a difficult question because Homer does not dwell for very long on the scepter at any one time.³⁰ Even in the passages that feature the scepter prominently there are complications. During the quarrel in Book 1, for example, Achilles uses the scepter unusually, to criticize rather than affirm kingly authority. The extended description of the transfer of the scepter through the house of Atreus in Book 2 at 100-108 ends with Agamemnon

²⁸ On the function of the scepter, see Benveniste (1973: 323-326), Griffin (1980: 9-12), Kirk (1985 *ad* 2.100-108), Van Wees (1992, esp. 276-280), and Latacz (2002, *ad* 1.234).

²⁹ *σκηπάνιον* is a diminutive form of *σκήπτρον*, means “staff,” and appears twice in Homer (*Il.* 13.59, 24.247).

³⁰ Unruh (2011: 280-281) has recently stressed this point.

leaning on the scepter (τῶι ὃ γ' ἐρεισάμενος, 109), a gesture which Benardete (1963: 16), Griffin (1980: 10), and Easterling (1989: 108) believe Homer includes to make an ironic point about the ultimate instability of the basis of Agamemnon's authority.³¹ For these reasons we must treat the information about the scepter's use in these passages cautiously.

All this is background: for the present argument the more important question is whose scepter does Achilles hold? If Achilles casts the scepter to the ground at *Il.* 1.246 out of frustration at his own powerlessness to prevent Agamemnon from wronging him, as the act is usually read,³² whether or not Achilles is holding Agamemnon's personal scepter would make a difference to the impact of the speech. If Achilles were holding Agamemnon's scepter, we would have further grounds to interpret Achilles' actions as a direct personal attack on Agamemnon.

It is surprising, then, that the question of ownership is not resolved in Achilles' speech. If the scepter does in fact belong to Agamemnon, Achilles does not say so explicitly. Nor does Achilles say that he is holding his own scepter (which makes Van Wees' idea that Achilles *is* holding his own scepter a little less plausible).³³ Achilles leaves this information out of his

³¹ This irony has two aspects. First, Agamemnon, though he is leader of the Achaean forces, cannot even stand on his own two feet, requiring the scepter to keep his balance (noted by Benardete). Secondly, the political support which the scepter provides to Agamemnon derives from Zeus, but, as Griffin and Easterling point out, Zeus' support is illusory in this scene because the god has tricked Agamemnon with the false dream at the beginning of Book 2.

³² Griffin (1980: 11-12), Easterling (1989: 113), Lowenstam (1993: 67), and Lynn-George (1993: 201) all adopt this interpretation. By contrast Mondi (1980: 211), interpreting the scepter as a surrogate for a thunderbolt, argues that Achilles shows his power with the gesture, not powerlessness. If Mondi is correct, Achilles could still be making this gesture of power ironically to express his powerlessness.

³³ But this solution does not satisfactorily explain one other pair of passages regarding Odysseus and Telemachus. Briefly, the question is: whose scepter does Telemachus fling to the ground at *Od.* 2.80? Van Wees believes that every family possesses only one scepter and the *Iliad*, to me,

speech either because it would have been obvious to the audience or because it is ultimately less important than what he actually does say, which is ultimately my view on the question. What is important is how the focus of Achilles' speech broadens as it goes along, how Achilles moves from insulting Agamemnon to implicating the rest of the Achaeans.³⁴ Indeed, the focus shifts at the moment when Achilles swears the oath. He does not keep criticizing Agamemnon as he has been doing for the first eight lines. Were this speech to continue in the same vein as it began, we might have expected Achilles to say something to the effect of, "Agamemnon, you are not at all worthy of this scepter which you wield so proudly and believe means so much." Actually, Agamemnon is curiously absent from the excursus (a fact which makes the excursus more simile-like): the only human beings Achilles mentions in it are the sons of the Achaeans, the marshals (*δικασπόλοι*, 238) who will wield the scepter after it has been cut. This broadening of focus leads Van Wees to argue that Achilles' oath does not describe only the scepter Achilles is holding (which Van Wees believes is Achilles' own) but all scepters. Ultimately I judge that Achilles is probably holding Agamemnon's scepter.

Nevertheless, my argument in this chapter does not hinge on the question of ownership. I am interested, rather, to connect the excursus with the battle narrative in order to compare how the poet and Achilles use the image of the mutilated tree differently. Close analysis of the

makes clear that Odysseus took the family scepter with him to Troy because, according to Antenor at 3.216-223, Odysseus regularly speaks with a scepter. And if Telemachus is not speaking with the family scepter, then the Telemachus passage presents an anomaly, which Van Wees admits (279). It seems more likely to me that Telemachus receives a speaking staff (not his own) from the heralds.

³⁴ Finley's (1977 [1954]: 79) comment that Achilles and Agamemnon speak only to each other during their quarrel seems to miss not only the present passage but also the one earlier at 1.184-187 when Agamemnon decides to take Briseis for himself. Here, Agamemnon justifies his decision to the army by making clear that he is making an example of Achilles in order that *no other man* strive against him. Surely Agamemnon intends the other soldiers and kings to mark this moment well.

imagery in the rest of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* will define precisely how the poet regularly uses this image. The poet's practice will form the frame through which we will be better able to see exactly how Achilles manipulates this traditional imagery to craft criticism of Agamemnon. We have said that Achilles makes two interrelated criticisms: he first says that Agamemnon is an unjust king and second that his injustice will kill Achaean soldiers. I will argue that we will be better able to understand the first criticism if we look at other scenes in Homer in which good kings hold scepters, on the Shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.450-460), for example, and in the third book of the *Odyssey*. Achilles' second criticism draws its power from the similes likening dying soldiers to falling trees that Homer regularly uses to mark the moment of the death of heroes. In Achilles' mouth, as we will see, this imagery takes the shape of a threat against Agamemnon and a warning to the Achaean soldiers whose lives are most in danger without Achilles to protect them.

THE BOUNTY OF GOOD KINGSHIP

The scepter figures in a scene of reaping on the Shield that connects good kingship, good teamwork, and the agricultural abundance that results from good governance (*Il.* 18:550-560), forming a counterpoint to the broken situation of *Iliad* 1:

ἐν δ' ἐτίθει τέμενος βασιλῆϊον· ἔνθα δ' ἔριθοι	550
ἥμων ὀξείας δρεπάνας ἐν χερσὶν ἔχοντες.	
δράγματα δ' ἄλλα μετ' ὄγμον ἐπήτριμα πίπτου ἔραζε,	
ἄλλα δ' ἀμαλλοδετήρες ἐν ἑλλεδανοῖσι δέοντο.	
τρεῖς δ' ἄρ' ἀμαλλοδετήρες ἐφέστασαν· αὐτὰρ ὅπισθεν	
παῖδες δραγμαεύοντες, ἐν ἀγκαλίδεσσι φέροντες,	555
ἀσπερχές παρέχον. βασιλεὺς δ' ἐν τοῖσι σιωπῇ	
σκῆπτρον ἔχων ἐστήκει ἐπ' ὄγμον γηθόσυνος κῆρ·	
κῆρυκες δ' ἀπάνευθεν ὑπὸ δρυὶ δαῖτα πένοντο,	
βοῦν δ' ἱερεύσαντες μέγαν ἀμφεπον· αἱ δὲ γυναικες	
δείπνον ἐρίθοισιν λεύκ' ἄλφιτα πολλὰ πάλυνον.	560

And [Hephaestus] was putting a king's private land [on the shield]; and there laborers holding in their hands the sharp scythes were reaping grain.
 And some armfuls were falling in succession to the ground along the furrow-line,
 and others sheaf-binders were binding in sheaves.
 And three sheaf-binders were standing by; but behind them

children picking up armfuls, carrying them in their arms,
were giving them over without a pause; and the king in silence among them
holding his scepter was standing, pleased in his heart, on the furrow-line.
But the heralds far away were preparing a feast under an oak,
and they were busy sacrificing a great ox; and the women
were scattering much white barley as a dinner for the laborers.

The class dynamics of this scene differ from the situation in Book 1. On the Shield one king supervises his social inferiors while in Book 1 Agamemnon tries to be chief of many kings.³⁵

The setting also differs: on the Shield the workers reap and cook in the king's private space while in Book 1 the Achaeans meet in the *agora*. Still, the comparison between the two is valuable to appreciate the difference between the successful king on the Shield and clumsy Agamemnon. In the scene on the Shield the narrator presents a scene in which different groups (reapers, sheaf-binders, children, heralds, women) work together simultaneously to reap the grain and prepare a common feast.³⁶ The king needs not to say a word (*σιωπήει*, 556) to orchestrate and synchronize all this disparate action. Contrasting this passage with the quarrel in Book 1,³⁷ we may note that Agamemnon makes no less than six speeches and cannot persuade any of the Achaeans to act productively or bring about a solution to the problem of the plague facing the Achaeans. Agamemnon does not hold the scepter nor does he take the lead to solve the crisis facing the plague-stricken Achaeans. The prominence that Achilles gives the scepter in his

³⁵ Taplin (1990) argues that critics have overrated Agamemnon's power over the other *βασιλείς*: Agamemnon is not lord over the other kings in the way that the king on the Shield is lord over the reapers.

³⁶ Cf. Marg (1971 [1957]: 28), who observes that men on the Shield do not work in isolation but rather in groups, and, in contrast to typical epic practice, Homer does not give them names. Reinhardt (1961 [1956]: 402) also stresses how easy the work is because everyone works together.

³⁷ Stanley (1993) contrasts the king on the Shield with Agamemnon, calling it "an inadvertently provocative allusion to the cause of the quarrel that has issued in Patroclus' death" (25). Scully (2003: 36) dismisses this idea because he believes Achilles directs his attention toward the future and is not likely to be mulling over the past.

speech, read in the light of this passage, must ultimately be ironical. We learn from this passage that the scepter normally represents social cohesion, but the themes of Achilles' speech are separation and group dysfunction. In Book 1 it falls to Nestor to conciliate and try to mend the broken bonds between Achilles and Agamemnon. By the time Achilles swears his oath on the scepter, he is out for himself: the picture on the Shield presents an opposite ideal.³⁸

In the *Odyssey*, Homer presents a scene in Pylos with many of the same details as are on the Shield, casting the conciliator Nestor as the good king.³⁹ The telltale phrase *σκήπτρον ἔχων* appears here, too, and sets the tone of good order and cooperation (*Od.* 3.410-412):⁴⁰

ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἤδη κηρὶ δαμείς Ἀϊδόσδε βεβήκει,
 Νέστωρ αὖ τότ' ἐφίξε Γερήνιος, οὗρος Ἀχαιῶν,
 σκήπτρον ἔχων·

But [Neleus], overcome by his doom, went to Hades,
 and Gerenian Nestor in his turn sat, a bulwark for the Achaeans,
 holding his scepter.

³⁸ The general idea that the pictures on the Shield contrast ironically with the *Iliad*, especially with the surrounding situation in Book 18 is variously brought out in scholarship on the Shield. For Reinhardt (1961 [1956]) the Shield is a great deal less violent than the poem proper (409); Taplin (2001 [1980]) sees a great deal more prosperity on the Shield than in the *Iliad* generally. More specifically, the lack of ships on the Shield marks a difference between it and the *Iliad*, the story of battle around ships (Marg, 1971 [1957]: 29-30). Marg (1971 [1957]: 24) convincingly asserts that the reason why the audience sees the Shield as it is being forged on Olympus, and not on earth (as Vergil chose when Aeneas receives his arms from Venus in *Aeneid* 8), is because Achilles, driven to distraction by rage and grief over the death of Patroclus, cannot appreciate the peaceful outlook presented on the Shield. Schadewaldt (1965 [1938]: 371) also believes that the peaceful pictures on the Shield, which are so full of life, contrast with the situation of Achilles who is about to die.

³⁹ Cf. Taplin (2001 [1980]: 346, 348).

⁴⁰ This expression, i.e. a form of the verb ἔχω with σκήπτρον as the direct object, appears at *Il.* 2.101, 2.279, 3.218-219, 18.505, 18.557 and *Od.* 3.412, 11.91, 11.569. The expression *στέμματ' ἔχων* (*Il.* 1.14, 1.373), used of Chryses trying unsuccessfully to ransom Chryseis, is closely related: *σκήπτρον* appears on the immediately following line (*χρυσέωι ἀνὰ σκήπτρῳ*, 1.15, 1.374).

Nestor gives orders to his five sons (all named in a catalogue at 3.413-414) to procure a cow for sacrifice (ἀλλ' ἄγ' ὁ μὲν πεδίονδ' ἐπὶ βοῦν ἵτω, 3.421 corresponding to *Il.* 18.559) and to tell the slave-women to prepare dinner (εἵπατε δ' εἴσω / δμῶῃσιν κατὰ δώματ' ἀγακλυτὰ δαῖτα πένεσθαι, 3.427-428 corresponding to *Il.* 18.558, δαῖτα πένοντο and αἱ δὲ γυναῖκες / δείπνουν ... πάλυνον, 18.559-560). After Nestor gives his orders everyone works together without complaint to bring everything to pass: “Ὡς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἐποίπνουν. “So Nestor spoke, and they all got busy” (3.430). Indeed, we can infer from Homer’s choice of verb some eagerness on the part of the workers: far from grouching or complaining, Nestor’s sons and subjects almost seem to spring to their work. The narrator matter-of-factly describes the work of each individual in turn (3.430-446): Laerkes the goldsmith gilds the cow’s horns (3.437-438); Nestor’s sons Stratus and Echephron bring the cow (3.439); another son Aretus brings water (3.440-441); another son Thrasymedes deals the sacrificial blow with the axe (3.442-443 and 3.448-450); another son Perseus collects the blood (3.444); Nestor himself scatters the barley and makes the prayer (3.444-447). While Nestor himself cooks the meal, his daughter Polykaste is busy, too, bathing Telemachus. So each individual of Nestor’s family contributes their share to achieve the larger goal. Nestor’s management of Pylos, therefore, presents, after the Shield, a second counterexample to the discordant and rancorous mismanagement of *Iliad* 1.

In Book 9 Agamemnon promises such a life to Achilles as Nestor has after the war and as the king on the Shield enjoys in Book 18. Here, too, the scepter is a symbol of good order and agricultural abundance (*Il.* 9.153-156; repeated almost verbatim at 9.295-298 by Odysseus):

πάσαι δ' ἐγγὺς ἁλός, νέαται Πύλου ἡμαθόεντος,
ἐν δ' ἄνδρες ναίουσι πολύρρηγες πολυβοῦται,
οἳ κέ ἐ δωτίνησι θεὸν ὥς τιμήσουσιν
καὶ οἱ ὑπὸ σκήπτρῳ λιπαρὰς τελέουσι θέμιστας.

And all [the cities] are near the sea, outermost of sandy Pylos,
and men rich in sheep and with many cattle dwell there,

who will honor him like a god with gifts
and they will accomplish his fair ordinances under his scepter.

These passages in Book 9 connect especially closely to Achilles' oath because both passages reference Zeus' ordinances (*θέμιστας* / *πρὸς Διός*, 1.238-239) but have opposite effects.

Achilles includes them in his oath almost sarcastically: he believes that the power of the scepter is hollow because of Agamemnon's bad judgment and mismanagement as he contrasts Agamemnon's puny power with Zeus' justice. In his excursus Achilles argues that Agamemnon's dead scepter does not protect Zeus' ordinances. In Book 9, however, we see a perfect congruence between the decrees and the authority represented in the scepter that brings them to pass.

It is also important to include Odysseus' description of the ideal king in Book 19 of the *Odyssey* (108-114). Even though the scepter does not explicitly appear here, we see overlaps of diction with Achilles' oath which nominate this passage to be a third counterexample to the situation in Book 1:

ἧ γάρ σευ κλέος οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἰκάνει,
ὥς τέ τευ ἦ βασιλῆος ἀμύμονος, ὅς τε θεοῦδῆς
ἀνδράσιν ἐν πολλοῖσι καὶ ἰφθίμοισιν ἀνάσσω
εὐδικίας ἀνέχῃσι, φέρῃσι δὲ γαῖα μέλαινα
πυροῦς καὶ κριθάς, βρίθῃσι δὲ δένδρεα καρπῶ,
τίκτε δ' ἔμπεδα μῆλα, θάλασσα δὲ παρέχῃ ἰχθῦς
ἕξ εὐνηγεσίδης, ἀρετῶσι δὲ λαοὶ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ.

For your [Penelope's] repute reaches the broad sky,
like some blameless king, who, god-fearing,
ruling among many strong men,
offers justice, and the dark earth bears
wheat and barley, and the trees are heavy with fruit,
and the flocks bear young constantly, and the sea provides fish
because of his leadership, and the people are preeminent because of him.

Indeed, here in the *Odyssey*, we see the opposite of *Iliad* 1.231: *δημοβόρος βασιλεύς, ἐπεὶ οὐτιδανοῖσιν ἀνάσσεις* "You people-devouring king, since you are lord over weaklings." The repetition of *ἀνάσσω* establishes a bond between the passages. We also see how Homer creates

contrast between the good-for-nothings in Book 1 (*οὐτιδανοῖσιν*, 1.231) and the ideal king's impressive subjects (*ἀνδράσιν ἐν πολλοῖσι καὶ ἰφθίμοισιν*, 19.110).⁴¹ The excellence of this king's subjects is explicit: *ἀρετῶσι δὲ λαοὶ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ* (19.114). While Achilles excoriates Agamemnon with *δημοβόρος βασιλεύς*, Odysseus' ideal king is blameless (*ἀμύμονος*) and godlike (*θεουδής*). Achilles' insult *δημοβόρος* is important, too. Far from stealing food from the people and going hungry as Agamemnon does (since he will be reduced to gnawing on his own heart: *σὺ δ' ἔνδοθι θυμὸν ἀμύξεις*, *Il.* 1.243), Odysseus' ideal king oversees a bounty of wheat, barley, trees, and fruit (*Od.* 19.111-114).⁴² Here, as in *Il.* 9.153-156, we see more vividly than perhaps anywhere in Homer that good governance leads to rich harvests. In this connection, the scepter of *Iliad* 1, the mutilated tree that will not produce leaves or shoots again, finds its opposite in the ideal king's perpetually bountiful fruit trees (19.112).

The expression *σκήπτρον ἔχων* appears when the political situation is stable and judgments are fair. This sense of stability is reinforced even on the grammatical level by the progressive aspect of the present participle, which suggests that this peace will be endless and unchanging. The phrase appears twice in the second book of the *Iliad*, a tense and dramatic situation in which Agamemnon's power comes under threat. Homer conceives the opposite of stable order to be disorderly noise: when the assembly comes together, the soldiers quit their noise (*παυσάμενοι κλαγγῆς*, 2.100), sit down, and listen to Agamemnon, who stands, scepter in hand (*ἔστη σκήπτρον ἔχων*, 2.101). Once Agamemnon tests the army, and the host is

⁴¹ This contrast becomes even clearer if *ἀνδράσιν* here is taken in the marked sense of “hero” or “he-man,” (on which see Benardete, 1963: 2-3). Furthermore the expression *πολλοῖσι καὶ ἰφθίμοισιν* praises the ideal king's subjects, just as the same expression in the *Iliad* proem (*πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς*, 1.3) highlights how outstanding the Achaean dead were.

⁴² Even the image of the dark earth (19.111), formulaic as it is, also contributes to the strong connection here forged between abundance and good governance.

stampeding to the ships, and all order has been lost, Odysseus takes Agamemnon's scepter and begins to call the soldiers back again (2.278-280):

ὥς φάσαν ἡ πλῆθ'· ἀνὰ δὲ πτολίπορθος Ὀδυσσεύς
ἔστη σκῆπτρον ἔχων, παρὰ δὲ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη
εἰδομένη κήρυκι σιωπᾶν λαὸν ἀνώγει,

Thus the crowd spoke; and the city-sacker Odysseus
stood, holding his scepter, and alongside him grey-eyed Athena
appearing like a herald ordered him to silence the people.

We see a second time how noise signals the breakdown of political order. Good order is silence (σιωπᾶν, 2.280) as it is on the Shield (σιωπῆι, 18.556). A similar passage involving the themes of restraint and orderliness appears in the trial scene on the Shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.502-506). In this passage, heralds restrain the people (503), and the speakers in the case hold scepters (σκῆπτρα δὲ κηρύκων ἐν χέρσ' ἔχον ἡεροφώνων, 505). The trial itself, under the calming authority of the scepter,⁴³ proceeds in an explicitly orderly way (ἀμοιβηδὶς δ' ἐδίκαζον “the speakers argued their case taking turns”).⁴⁴ There is no *κλαγγή*, as there is in the conflicts of Books 1 and 2, in this scene on the Shield. Similarly, in Book 7 the heralds Talthibius and Idaius stop the duel between Ajax and Hector and restore order by wielding scepters (μέσσωι δ' ἀμφοτέρων σκῆπτρα σχέθον “the heralds held scepters between [Ajax and Hector],” *Il.* 7.277).

So when Achilles swears his oath he relies on the symbolic resonance of the scepter as the source of royal authority, the keeper of law and order, guarantor of fair dealings, and the promoter of restraint and concord, just as he rages at Agamemnon. Because the scepter is associated so closely with these placid themes, with the resolution of conflict, when Achilles

⁴³ Similarly, Minos in the underworld judges without opposition, wielding his golden scepter (χρῦσεον σκῆπτρον ἔχοντα, *Od.* 11.569). Likewise, Teiresias prophesies with the scepter's authority (χρῦσεον σκῆπτρον ἔχων, *Od.* 11.91).

⁴⁴ Reinhardt (1961 [1956]) especially stresses how Homer's emphasis on the procedures of this trial ensure that it runs smoothly (403).

uses the scepter to exacerbate conflict, to shatter his alliance with Agamemnon, and to annihilate the possibility of a peaceful solution, he craftily uses this symbolic object to make his criticism against Agamemnon stand out all the more and achieve layers of vehemence that he would not be able to achieve in any other way. Achilles hints at the traditional positive qualities of the scepter in order to gain rhetorical leverage which he uses to subvert these same values all the more.⁴⁵

CONVENTIONAL IMAGERY FOR THE DEATH OF HEROES

I claim that the mutilated tree of Achilles' excursus can be explained as Achilles' deliberate manipulation of conventional similes that liken heroes at their death to falling trees. To argue this we shall have to demonstrate that these similes consist of discrete elements that the poet can manipulate for poetic effect. To show this, we shall build chiefly upon the recent work of William C. Scott (2009), and on his notion of the *simileme*.

Scholars have repeatedly asked two questions in their studies of similes—about the subjects and themes of similes on the one hand, and about their function on the other.⁴⁶ It is apparent that various themes and motifs recur throughout the similes of the *Iliad*, and, given this repetition, scholars have sought to understand what themes this repeated imagery reinforces. So,

⁴⁵ And in addition to this rhetoric Achilles' final gesture emphatically declares the same message.

⁴⁶ I shall be more concerned in the present chapter to discuss the themes of similes. Important studies of the function and placement of similes include Coffey (1957), Moulton (1977), and Martin (1997). Coffey (1957) shows that similes regularly appear to illustrate the movement or appearance of a person, god, or group, to make more vivid the sound of battle or of the general situation, or to measure space, time, or large numbers; they also describe the psychology of characters. Moulton (1977) is particularly interested in the poetic effects of simile sequences, how simile pairs and longer sequences energize the narrative and focus on the heroes. Martin (1997) argues that similes mark the boundaries of episodes in the narrative: he is critical of the "thematic" approach adopted by Fränkel and Moulton because he believes their approaches do not take into account the principles of oral poetics as much as they should.

for example, Fränkel (1977 [1921]: 35-41) distinguishes a category “Bäume und Pflanzen” in which he presents the broad themes which Homer communicates with the imagery of trees, leaves, and other plants. Fränkel rightly emphasizes how the similes in which trees fall celebrate the excellence of victorious warriors who are repeatedly likened in the simile to skillful and persistent woodcutters, remarking how the tough tree challenges their strength and endurance (35).⁴⁷ Scott (1974) also groups similes by type, observing that tree similes always relate to heroes, whether unmoving or falling. Redfield (1994 [1975]) makes larger thematic groupings (the three main ones are weather, craftsmanship, and hunting and herding), in order to uncover “a substratum of the poet’s mind or—since probably few similes are his original invention—of the poetic tradition in which he is at home” (187). Redfield draws out as a theme the persistent hostility of nature against the works of man.⁴⁸

Just as the themes which particular types of similes evoke recur throughout the poems, so too is each simile of a given type constructed from a menu of similar elements. Scott (2009) has recently proposed that every simile presents a combination of traditional elements tailored to its particular narrative context. In the case of tree similes these elements include the species of tree, where the tree grows, whether it falls, who or what fells it and why it is felled. Scott terms the whole ensemble of these elements the *simileme*, the “nonverbal background material shared by

⁴⁷ Several scholars, for example, Bassett (1938: 117), Porter (1972: 14-15), Schein (1984: 72-76) and Minchin (2001: 41) believe that Homer expresses sadness through tree similes. Certainly Homer presents the Trojans sympathetically: the tree imagery brings across how the Achaeans have to earn their victory against the Trojans. The Trojans are worthy adversaries for the Achaeans—but the fact remains that Achaean woodcutters never give up before the tree is felled.

⁴⁸ Similarly Porter (1972) argues that Homer habitually uses similes involving harvesting and agriculture, craftsmen at work, children at play, and the calmness of nature to create sharp contrasts between the worlds of war and peace in order to bring out more clearly for his audience the inherent destructiveness of war.

poet and audience—in other words, the full range of possibilities for dealing with the standard topics that have been developed through a long series of performances” (19). Scott applies to similes a theory of composition similar to that of Nagler (1974), who argues that we could extrapolate the *Gestalt*, or Platonic form, so to speak, of a typical scene by close examination of its instantiations in the poem (the allomorphs). Scott’s category “simileme” is the *Gestalt* of a typical simile. Scott’s concept is particularly useful because it suggests that variation among similes is the result of deliberate adaptation on the poet’s part from a common traditional source. As we pointed out in the previous chapter (pp. 30-32), the skillful poet relies on the expectations of listeners knowledgeable in traditional patterns of story, motif, imagery, and diction. The poetry happens when the poet diverges from established patterns in meaningful ways.

Building on Scott’s ideas, I want to show now that the narrator deploys some of these regularly recurring elements according to patterns that explain why he uses tree similes in battle. Analysis reveals that the narrator uses tree similes—and the “woodcutter” element in particular—to celebrate the superior strength and endurance of the victorious Achaeans. When, therefore, Achilles makes χαλκός “bronze” the subject of ἔλεψεν instead of a craftsman, he transfigures the traditional meaning of tree imagery established by the narrator in order to craft criticism that undercuts Agamemnon and call the entire war against Troy into question.

1) DUELS FEATURING TREE SIMILES

Chart 1 (pp. 80-81) presents information about the narrative situations in which tree similes appear. It identifies the names of the warriors involved and on what side they fight in the war (“A” designates an Achaean; “T” a Trojan). The third column indicates whether the tree in the simile is struck by the blade of an axe or by bad weather, and the fourth column reveals whether the tree falls as a result. We see that most tree similes appear in individual duels in

which one hero kills another. The death is represented in the simile by the falling of the tree. Seven of nine individual duels that feature tree similes end with the death of a hero.⁴⁹

By looking at the first two columns we discover our first of two important patterns—that this simile family is deployed when Achaeans kill Trojans and not vice versa (with one small exception). The narrator recoils from depicting dying Achaeans as falling trees.⁵⁰ The exception, at *Il.* 5.559-560, when the Achaeans Krethon and Orsilochus fall like fir trees (*τοῖω τὼ χείρεσσιν ὕπ' Αἰνείαιο δαμέντε / καππεσέτην, ἐλάτησιν ἐοικότες ὑψηλῆσιν*), is only a short simile that follows immediately on a longer simile likening the Achaeans to lions killed by herdsmen. Short similes may not carry the impact of a fully elaborated tree simile because the details about how the tree falls and who fells it are left out.⁵¹ Further, the narrator's pro-Achaean tree bias explains why Polypoites and Leonteus who are compared to rooted oaks capable of withstanding windstorms day after day, are Achaeans, not Trojans.

This pro-Achaean bias becomes clearer when we examine the third and fourth columns of Chart 1. Column 3 indicates that trees in tree similes face two threats. Loggers can cut and the wind can blow. But, as we see from column 4, these threats are not equally severe. We discover

⁴⁹ The two exceptions are when Ajax wounds Hector (14.414-420) and when Polypoites and Leonteus survive the attack of Asius (12.131-136).

⁵⁰ The bias against portraying the Achaeans as falling trees is stronger than the pro-Achaean bias in the casualty lists. Armstrong (1969) concludes that the poet has this bias because the poet recounts 208 Trojan deaths against only 61 Achaean deaths in the battle narrative. That is, the number of Trojan casualties outnumber Achaeans by a rate of nearly 4:1. We would expect, then, if the use of this imagery were neutral that the falling tree would stand for an Achaean in 22% of cases (61/269). We find, however, that in only one case out of seven does the tree represent an Achaean (14% of cases).

⁵¹ Kirk (1990: 116 *ad* 5.560) distinguishes between short and elaborated tree similes, speculating “Here the poet may feel that the brothers’ actual death has not been much illuminated by the main lion simile, and so adds a short and pathetic reference to their collapsing like pine trees.” Kirk goes too far to call this bare reference “pathetic.” On the connection between tree-felling and pathos, see above Ch. 1 pp. 1-2, esp. n. 2.

that the carpenter is more effective at felling trees than the wind is. It is not surprising so much that woodsmen are effective as that storms are so ineffective, especially in light of Redfield's influential discussion of the power of nature in similes.⁵² Indeed weather accounts for all the Ns in the fourth column. Wind succeeds at uprooting only one especially vulnerable olive sapling in the case of Euphorbus (17.51-60). Furthermore, the simile at 16.765-771 depicting a storm blowing through a forest ends with the trees shaken, but still standing. And finally, the oak to which Hector is compared in Book 14 is not completely obliterated by Zeus' lightning. Bad weather and windstorms more often than not lack the strength to uproot trees. More effective are woodsmen, and woodsmen in the battle narrative are (with one exception) always Achaeans. It is the craftsman, then, more than any other figure, that symbolizes Achaean strength and endurance in battle, as Fränkel suggested at the beginning of his section on *Bäume und Pflanzen* in *Die Homerischen Gleichnisse* (35). Given that the narrator's pro-Achaean bias leads him to restrict the use of craftsman and tree similes to the Achaeans, it is fitting that, when he uses similes for Hector and the Trojans, he illustrates their success with the less lethal imagery of storms and wind.⁵³

⁵² Redfield (1994 [1975]: 188-189) treats as separate those similes that feature storms from those that deal with craftsmanship. About the first group, he writes: "Nature is presented as stormy, violent, and dangerous...Here, then, is the first of our themes: nature as hostile to man." In similes of craftsmanship, "nature is benign and turned to the purposes of man." Yet tree imagery can appear in both groups, and it is our goal here to compare one with the other. Redfield goes on to claim that while technical similes stand in contrast to the violence of war, a simile of storm or flood "most often develops and reinforces the tone of its context; weather is even more violent than war...Combat is an arena of force, and weather appears in the similes most often as an image of pure force unleashed in the world" (190-191).

⁵³ Homer uses storm imagery most often to mark the success of the Trojans and of Hector in the battle narrative. Of fifteen similes (whether long or short) eleven refer to the Trojan army or to Hector as a storm. The storm similes for Trojans are: 5.522-527, 12.375-377, 13.39, 13.795-801, 15.618-622, 17.263-267; for Hector: 11.297-298, 11.305-309, 12.40, 15.624. Twice Homer uses storm similes to describe the equal fighting of the two armies (13.334-338 and

I mentioned just now that the narrator does in one case depict a Trojan as a woodcutter, an exception that proves the rule (*Il.* 11.86-91):

ἦμος δὲ δρυτόμος περ ἀνὴρ ὠπλίσσατο δεῖπνον
οὔρεος ἐν βήσσησιν, ἐπεὶ τ' ἐκορέσσατο χεῖρας
τάμνων δένδρεα μακρά, ἄδος τέ μιν ἴκετο θυμόν,
σιτοῦ τε γλυκεροῖο περὶ φρένας ἥμερος αἰρεῖ,
τῆμος σφῇ ἀρετῇ Δαναοὶ ῥήξαντο φάλαγγας,
κεκλόμενοι ἐτάροισι κατὰ στιχάς.

And when an oak-cutter prepares his dinner
in the dells of the mountain, when he grows tired in his hands
of cutting tall trees, and weariness comes over his heart,
and desire for sweet food takes hold of his mind,
at that time did the Danaans by their excellence break the line,
calling to their companions through the ranks.

While this hungry woodcutter who gives up is not explicitly connected to either side, the narrative suggests he stands in for a Trojan because it is the Greek side who break through the Trojan line immediately after this simile. The Achaeans have more grit and a greater capacity for endurance than the Trojans.

Generally, then, the tree similes and storm similes demarcate a scale by which Homer judges the relative excellence of the fighting from duel to duel. At the head of this scale stands the image of the woodsman felling a tree used to illustrate how an Achaean prevails over a Trojan.⁵⁴ These similes appear in the battle narrative to glorify the superior martial prowess of the Achaeans over the Trojans.⁵⁵

14.394-395). In the battle narrative the Achaeans are never compared to storms (in one of his old war stories Nestor compares himself attacking the Epeians to a stormcloud, 11.746). Homer also compares Ares' roar to the noise of a storm (20.51-53) and the dust from the chariot race in the funeral games for Patroclus to a stormcloud (23.366). Cf. Purves (2010a: 328).

⁵⁴ As we see in Chart 1, this configuration of details occurs four times in the *Iliad*: for the deaths of Simoesius, Imbrius, Asius, and Sarpedon.

⁵⁵ More distantly related are similes in which the warriors fight as fire burns trees. For the most part the fire in these similes represents armies. Detailed similes that liken warriors to fire (by

2) SIMOESIUS

The similes associated with the deaths of Simoesius, Imbrius, Asius, and Sarpedon represent, so to speak, the point of departure for Achilles' excursus. In both the similes and the excursus, the tree is cut by bronze; in every simile except that for Imbrius the poet says explicitly that the fallen tree's wood will be used to fashion a useful cultural object, just as the tree in Achilles' excursus will produce the scepter.

But if, as we determined above, these similes are a way for Homer to celebrate the martial success of the Achaeans by telling a story in parallel that woodsmen overpower nature to produce cultural artifacts, how can the image of the tree felled by the woodcutter's axe be at all appropriate for Achilles' critical speech? In fact, Achilles is making a claim quite opposite to that of the tree similes: that Achaean soldiers will die in vain because of Agamemnon's mistreatment of him.

The key difference between Achilles' excursus and a typical narrative tree simile concerns the position of the craftsman. We can see the manipulation most distinctly by looking closely at the most detailed tree-felling simile in the *Iliad*. That simile belongs to Simoesius, the third Trojan killed once the battle begins in earnest, and parallels between this simile and the excursus are particularly striking (*Il.* 4.482-489):

ὃ δ' ἐν κονίησι χαμαὶ πέσεν αἵγειρος ὥς,
ἧ ῥά τ' ἐν εἰαμενῇ ἐλεος μέγαλοιό πεφύκηι
λείη, ἀτάρ τέ οἱ ὄζοι ἐπ' ἀκροτάτῃ πεφύασιν·
τὴν μὲν θ' ἄρματοπηγὸς ἀνὴρ αἴθωνι σιδήρῳ
ἐξέταμ', ὅφρα ἵτυν κάμψῃ περικαλλεῖ διφρῳι·

which I mean that the fire's fuel is included in the simile) do not tend to describe individual heroes besides Achilles. While Agamemnon (11.155-162) and Hector (15.603-606) are likened only once each to forest fires and only at the very pinnacle of their fighting excellence, Achilles fights like a fire along a riverbank at 21.12-16, and like a fire destroying a city at 21.520-525 and most strikingly like a forest fire at *Il.* 20.490-495. The gleam from Achilles' blazing head is like a city fire as well (18.207-214) and the gleam from his divine armor is like a city fire (19.375-380). Achilles' fire similes show how far Achilles outstrips the other heroes in fighting.

ἦ μὲν τ' ἄζομένη κείται ποταμοῖο παρ' ὄχθας·
τοῖον ἄρ' Ἀνθεμίδην Σιμοείσιον ἐξενάριξεν
Αἴας διογενής.

And he fell in the dust like a poplar,
which grows smooth in the lowland of a great marsh meadow,
but upon its very top grow shoots;
which a craftsman of chariots with the shining iron
cuts down, in order to craft a wheel for a very beautiful chariot;
it lies beside the banks of the river drying:
Such a one was the son of Anthemion, Simoesius, whom
god-born Ajax killed.

Here is Achilles' excursus for comparison (*Il.* 1.234-239):

ναὶ μὰ τόδε σκῆπτρον· τὸ μὲν οὐ ποτε φύλλα καὶ ὄζους
φύσει, ἐπεὶ δὴ πρῶτα τομὴν ἐν ὄρεσσι λέλοιπεν,
οὐδ' ἀναθληθήσει· περὶ γάρ ῥά ἐ χαλκὸς ἔλεψεν
φύλλά τε καὶ φλοιόν· νῦν αὐτέ μιν νῆες Ἀχαιῶν
ἐν παλάμηις φορέουσι δικασπόλοι, οἳ τε θέμιστας
πρὸς Διὸς εἰρύαται· ὃ δέ τοι μέγας ἔσσεται ὄρκος—

By this scepter, which will never grow leaves and shoots,
since it left its stump in the mountains,
and it will not bloom again; for the bronze stripped it of its
leaves and bark: now in turn the sons of the Achaeans,
the marshals, carry it in their hands, who protect the ordinances
of Zeus, and it will be a great oath:

These two passages certainly have images and themes in common: shoots (ὄζοι), growing (φύω), and metal (iron in the simile; bronze in the excursus). The language of the surrounding context is also similar: just as Simoesius falls like a poplar (πέσεν αἵγειρος ὥς, 4.482) at the hands of Ajax (ἔπλεθ' ὑπ' Αἴαντος μεγαθύμου δουρὶ δαμέντι, 4.479) so the Achaeans will fall at the hands of man-murdering Hector (εἴτ' ἂν πολλοὶ ὑφ' Ἑκτορος ἀνδροφόνουιο / θνήσκοντες πίπτωσι, 1.242-243).⁵⁶

Achilles does, however, make two subtle but crucial modifications to this motif, which reverse the tone of the imagery. Achilles changes the bronze from an instrument (like αἵθωνι σιδήρῳ, 4.485) into the subject of the excursus (χαλκὸς ἔλεψεν, 1.236) and elides the

⁵⁶ Hector is cast as a woodsman himself in the *Iliad* (3.60-63).

description of the manufacture of the scepter itself. We concluded above that tree imagery is connected with superior martial prowess in the similes because of the figure of the woodcutter, the heroic Achaean overpowering tough Trojan resistance to achieve glory on the battlefield. In the woodcutter and in the creation of a useful object from wood reside the glorious resonance of the tree-felling motif; without such a character and without such a story the mutilation of the tree turns into senseless violence. Now Achilles does not completely erase the woodcutter from his excursus: the bronze (*χαλκός*, 1.236) cannot cut by itself, but such a sentence calls attention to the absence of the woodcutter. Achilles tells the story after the tree has been cut—*λέλοιπεν* (1.235) is in the perfect tense—because he is interested in the consequences of this unheroic violence.⁵⁷

Achilles' excursus also differs from the poplar simile in that the manufacture of the scepter is not actually described. The excursus moves from the dead tree to the dispensation of justice, rather abruptly, with the terse *νῦν αὖτε* (1.237). Simoesius' poplar simile, by contrast, includes a purpose clause that explains what the poplar will become: the wheel-rim for a very beautiful chariot (*περικαλλέϊ δίφρῳ*, 4.486). The Simoesius passage makes explicit reference to beauty: in addition to the splendid chariot, the poplar grows smooth (*λείη*, 4.484).⁵⁸ On the other hand, Achilles' excursus has no words for beauty. All that is left of the tree is the stump (*τομήν*, 1.235) whereas Simoesius' poplar is presented whole before the chariot-maker cuts it down. Achilles' tree will never grow (*οὐ ποτε φύσει*, 1.234-235) or bloom again (*οὐδ' ἀναθελήσει*, 1.236); nothing so negative appears in the Simoesius simile.

⁵⁷ To be fair the narrator achieves this effect as well in the Simoesius simile with verbs in perfect tense (*πεφύκηι* and *πεφύασιν*, 4.483-484).

⁵⁸ The beauty of the fallen trees in similes is a recurring theme. Imbrius' ash tree has leaves "full of fresh life" (Cunliffe *s.v.*; *τέρενα φύλλα*, 13.180); Euphorbus' olive shoot is beautiful (*καλόν*, 17.57) and flourishing (*ἐριθηλές*, 17.53 and *τηλεθάον*, 17.57).

The absence of the woodcutter in the excursus creates a vacuum. The story requires a human agent, and we have shown how Achilles denies the Achaeans that privileged position in the excursus. The sequel to the oath supplies that destructive agent, and it is Hector. The Achaeans, Achilles predicts, will fall at the hands of man-murdering Hector (εὖτ' ἂν πολλοὶ ὕφ' Ἑκτορος ἀνδροφόνιοι / θνήσκοντες πίπτωσι, 1.242-243). Once Achilles is off the battlefield, the Achaeans and Trojans will switch roles: Hector will enjoy the success of an Achaean woodsman while the Argives assume the role of trees. In short, then, Achilles reverses the scheme Homer presents in the battle narrative in order to criticize Agamemnon.

Tree cutting is so common a way to illustrate and index the deaths of minor warriors like Simoesius that trees themselves often take up funereal associations through traditional referentiality.⁵⁹ These associations become explicit when Idomeneus kills Alkathous, and Alkathous stands still like a grave-marker or a lofty leafy tree (ὥς τε στήλην ἢ δένδρεον ὑψιπέτηλον, 13.437). These associations continue even outside the world of the similes and away from the Iliadic battlefield. The connection between tree-cutting and funerals is made emphatically when the poet details how the Achaeans cut the wood for Patroclus' funeral pyre (*Il.* 23.118-120):

αὐτίκ' ἄρα δρῦς ὑψικόμους ταναήκεϊ χαλκῶι
τάμνον ἐπειγόμενοι· ταῖ δὲ μέγ' ἄλ' αὖ κτυπέουσιν
πίπτον.

Straightaway they eagerly cut lofty-leafy oaks with their sharp-bladed bronze,
and the oaks, struck hard, fell.

⁵⁹ Six other warriors die like falling trees: Crethon and Orsiloehus, *Il.* 5.560, Imbrius, 13.177-181, Asius 13.389-393, Sarpedon 16.481-486, and Euphorbus 17.51-60. Furthermore, Hector's close call at 14.414-420 is compared to an oak struck by Zeus' lightning. Thetis compares Achilles to a fast-growing tree in an orchard at 18.54-60 and 18.434-441 because he is doomed to die. On tree similes as a taxonomic category, see Scott (1974: 70-71; 2009: 25). On traditional referentiality, see the discussion in Ch. 1 above, pp. 32-33 and Foley (1999).

Homer describes the trip the Achaeans make to the slopes of Ida to cut wood for Patroclus at length (23.108-126). More briefly Homer tells how the Achaeans gather firewood at the end of Book 8 for their dead (8.547) and how the Trojans gather wood for Hector's funeral (24.778,784). Homer says that the mass of firewood for Patroclus is as immense as a forest (23.127, 139, 163, 198). When Homer describes these preparations, whether in detail or only briefly, he forges a bond between the moment of death and its aftermath.⁶⁰ The associations can run both directions: when Homer compares the dying warrior to a falling tree, he glances ahead to his coming funeral; when he describes the tree-cutting required for the fallen warrior's funeral, he glances back to the warrior's death, as if in the course of the funeral preparations the mourners symbolically reenact the death itself.⁶¹ After a funeral, the connection between trees and the grave continues: elms grow on Eetion's tomb, the father of Andromache killed by Achilles (*Il.* 6.418-420).

When Achilles casts the scepter as a mutilated tree, he speaks as the Homeric narrator does about the battle to come.⁶² This analysis of the oath provides further grounds for

⁶⁰ Such associations appear in the *Odyssey* as well when Odysseus' companions cut logs for the funeral of their fallen comrade Elpenor (12.11) and when Penelope compares herself to the nightingale grieving for her dead son Itylus as she sits among the leaves of trees (19.518-524).

⁶¹ An interesting variant of this symbolic gesture occurs when Achilles cuts his hair over Patroclus' tomb (*Il.* 23.141-142): *στὰς ἀπάνευθε πυρῆς ξανθὴν ἀπεκείρατο χαίτην, / τὴν ῥα Σπερχειῷ ποταμῷ τρέφε τηλεθόωσαν* "And Achilles standing away from the pyre cut off his blond hair, / which he had grown to its bloom for the river Spercheius." In this passage Achilles' hair stands in for the cut wood. Indeed the language and details of these two lines recall the way Homer recounts the death of Simoesius. The river is the most conspicuous overlapping detail (cf. 4.475 and 487). *θρέπτρα* "recompense" (4.478) shares the same root as *τρέφε* (23.142). Then, too, the verbs *ἐξέταμ'* (4.486) and *ἀπεκείρατο* (23.141) are semantically equivalent; so, too, are the adjectives *θαλερόν* (4.474) and *τηλεθόωσαν* (23.142). These similarities unite Simoesius and the poplar tree with Achilles' hair.

⁶² Friedrich and Redfield (1999 [1978]: 240-241) have characterized Achilles' speech as particularly "poetic," citing his metapoetic lyre strumming at *Il.* 9.185-191 and (only briefly) his oath in Book 1. They also observe a penchant for "hypothetical imagining" (242-243)—which I

interpreting Achilles as a poet-figure in the epic because the poet creates for him an oath that so closely resembles one of the narrator's tree similes. But by manipulating the traditional conventions, the poet lets Achilles stretch traditional imagery to make vivid untraditional sentiments. By imagining Agamemnon's scepter as a mutilated tree, Achilles summons to his speech the pall of death and mourning which hangs mostly over the *Iliad's* battle books. These associations in Achilles' mouth become mortal threats against Agamemnon and dire warnings of death to the other Achaeans.

CONCLUSION

Through this speech Achilles breaks away from the Achaeans and dissociates himself and the Myrmidons from the previously united coalition. Achilles makes known his conflict with Agamemnon in a subtle and indirect way. Achilles draws from the narrator's image of the good king, as we see him pictured on the Shield and in the *Odyssey*, in order to show that Agamemnon is unjust. He predicts that Agamemnon's poor judgment will lead to the deaths of Achaeans, and this point, too, he couches in subtle and poetic language. Adopting the posture of the bard singing of battle he relates his conflict with Agamemnon to the universal conflict between man and nature which the narrator explores in the similes. He conjures the conventional martial imagery of tree-felling, modifies the motifs slightly, and transforms the themes of military supremacy into destruction and death.

The subversiveness of the speech makes Achilles' criticism of Agamemnon more effective. In order to criticize Agamemnon, Achilles must undermine the essential stability of Agamemnon's scepter. But great is the distance between the stable and orderly realm of the

believe is exemplified in his oath on the scepter in that Achilles is predicting death in the future for Agamemnon and the other Achaeans. Cf. Martin (1989: 204-5). See, too, the discussion in Ch. 1 above about Achilles as a poet figure (pp. 24-25 and 27-30).

scepter and the violent world of the Iliadic battlefield into which Achilles wants to cast it. If Achilles makes this dramatic rhetorical move too abruptly or without subtlety, he risks losing his audience. So Achilles works subtly to tease out ambiguities in the motifs of good kingship and tree-cutting, between concord and discord and between strength and vulnerability, in order to shorten the distance and smooth the way. We must not underestimate the importance of rhetorical one-upmanship in Achilles' speech. Achilles demonstrates, before he divorces himself from the Achaean cause, how much cleverer he is than Agamemnon, as if he were specifically responding to Agamemnon's claim that he is much better than Achilles (*Il.* 1.185-186).

CHART 1: Tree similes in the *Iliad*'s battle narrative are designed to praise the strength and endurance of the victorious Achaeans.

Tree similes appear in individual combat when:

A warrior dies in combat.

VICTOR	VANQUISHED	TREE HIT BY...	TREE FALLS?
Ajax (A)	Simoesius (T)	Craftsman/Axe	Y (4.473-89)
Ajax (A)	Imbrius (T)	Axe	Y (13.177-81)
Idomeneus (A)	Asius (T)	Carpenter/Axe	Y (13.389-93)
Patroclus (A)	Sarpedon (T)	Carpenter/Axe	Y (16.481-86)
Menelaus (A)	Euphorbus (T)	Storm/Wind ⁶³	Y (17.51-60)
Idomeneus (A) (short simile)	Alkathous (T)	-----	N (13.434-40)
Aeneas (T) (short simile)	Krethon (A) Orsilochus (A)	-----	Y (5.560)

A warrior falls but does not die.

ATTACKER	FALLEN	TREE HIT BY...	TREE FALLS?
Ajax (A)	Hector (T)	Zeus' lightning	N (14.414-20)

Warriors withstand the attack of another warrior.

ATTACKER	SURVIVOR	TREE HIT BY...	TREE FALLS?
Asius (T)	Polypoites (A) Leonteus (A)	Wind	N (12.131-6)

⁶³ Euphorbus is compared to an olive sapling grown in an orchard under the care of a gardener. Because the tree is young, it is vulnerable to storms in a way that full-grown uncultivated trees are not.

Tree similes appear in group combat when:

A warrior routs a crowd.

VICTOR	VANQUISHED	TREE HIT BY...	TREE FALLS?
Ajax (A)	Trojans	Flood ⁶⁴	N (11.492-7)

The armies fight against each other

Trojans	Achaeans	Wind	N (16.765-71).
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The armies fight against each other.

Danaans break through Trojan line when a woodcutter would grow tired of cutting trees and hungry for food. The woodcutter probably stands in for a Trojan (11.86-91).

North Wind and South Wind both strike a wood. The trees (oak, ash, cornel) crash against each other. Neither side gives way (16.765-771).

⁶⁴ The Trojans correspond to dried oaks and pines which the flood waters may only have swept away but not actually uprooted.

Chapter 3: Falling Into Oblivion: Leaf Imagery in Homer

Flush with the success of a spectacular, divinely sanctioned *aristeia*, Diomedes stares down an unfamiliar adversary, Glaucus, Lycian ally to the Trojans. If this new opponent is of mortal stock, Diomedes assures him, he will die (*Il.* 6.142-143):

εἰ δέ τις ἐσσι βροτῶν, οἱ ἀρούρης καρπὸν ἔδουσιν,
ἄσσον ἴθ', ὥς κεν θάσσον ὀλέθρου πείραθ' ἵκηται.

If you [Glaucus] are one among mortals, who eat the crop of the field,
come nearer to reach more swiftly the limits of your destruction.

Glaucus answers this threat by narrating at length his genealogy (*Il.* 6.145-211), prefacing his account with that durable simile comparing men to leaves, offering philosophizing ruminations that call the importance of genealogy into question.¹ These reflections, in turn, conceal a threat of their own (6.145-149):

Τυδεΐδῃ μεγάθυμῃ, τίη γενεῇν ἐρεΐνεις;
οἷη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη
τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίνεται ὥρῃ·
ὥς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ ἢ μὲν φύει, ἢ δ' ἀπολήγει.

Great-hearted son of Tydeus, why do you ask about my lineage?
As is the lineage of leaves, so too is the lineage of men.
Some leaves the wind pours to the ground, and others the forest when it
blooms makes grow, and they appear again in the season of spring:
in this way one generation of men grows, and another dies out.

I am interested in this passage because it offers another opportunity to examine Homeric similes in speech, or, more precisely, how the poet puts the imagery of similes to rhetorical use in the mouths of his characters. Glaucus' genealogy presents another instance of the phenomenon we explored in our previous chapter, "The Life and Death of Agamemnon's

¹ This image of the fragility of human life, by a certain stroke of poetic irony, became immortal. On the reception of this image in Greek and Roman literature, see especially Morpurgo (1927) and Sider (2001); Delz (1995: 9-12) focuses on Horace's simile likening words to leaves at *Ars Poetica* 60-62. On the continuation of the image in later European literature, see also Fornaro (1992: 30, n. 43).

Scepter.” In his genealogy, Glaucus likens the cycles of the growth and decay of leaves to the life and death of human beings, just as Achilles imaginatively linked the mutilation of the tree from which Agamemnon’s scepter was crafted to the coming deaths of nameless Achaean soldiers. We showed in that chapter how Achilles alters the elements of the conventional comparisons between warriors and falling trees which the narrator makes when the soldiers die, adapting his likeness to more memorably spurn Agamemnon’s authority.²

In Book 1, Achilles, facing the threat of losing Briseis, and with her his duly awarded honor,³ lashes out with his simile-like oath that brings vividly before his audience the mutilation of a stately tree. So too in Book 6, when Diomedes and Glaucus meet on the battlefield, Glaucus, in response to Diomedes’ threats, conjures a conventional image from a stock of natural imagery.⁴ Because leaves appear in both comparisons (twice in Achilles’ speech, at 1.234 and 236) and are the subject of Glaucus’ reminiscence, we are in a position to address two questions in this chapter. The first is whether Glaucus uses his simile to communicate the same sentiments to Diomedes as the narrator communicates to the audience with leaf imagery. That question is analogous to the one we framed in Chapter 2 where we compared Achilles’ quasi tree-simile

² Of these Achilles draws chiefly from the image of Simoesius falling like a poplar to be fashioned into a chariot wheel (*Il.* 4.473-489). See Ch. 2 above, pp. 73-76.

³ Cf. *Il.* 1.203 and 214, where both Achilles and Athena call Agamemnon’s behavior ὕβρις. Further, at 1.352-356, when Achilles sums up to Thetis what has upset him, he refers to honor with three different words in the course of five lines: τιμήν, 353; ἔτισεν, 354; ἠτίμησεν, 356.

⁴ That similes of men to leaves were a conventional element of Homeric imagery, with predictable associations to large numbers, see Fränkel (1921: 40) and Scott (1974: 81), who groups this comparison, on the basis of its function, with likenesses to grains of sand and to flowers, but because of the paucity of examples does not establish a separate leaf-simile “family.” Griffith (1975: 76-77), because of the presence of the two extended leaf-similes in Homer (at *Il.* 6.146-149 and 21.462-467), asserts, “the leaf-simile is already becoming a poetical commonplace, and regularly carries with it certain associations of man’s transience and insignificance” (77).

with the narrator's real ones. In this chapter, though, building on our conclusions from Chapter 2, we can frame a new question: to what extent do men-as-tree comparisons imply the same attitudes toward the human condition as those which liken men to leaves? Glaucus' simile, therefore, affords a unique opportunity to study not only the phenomenon of similes in speech, but also the host of different poetic associations triggered by closely related but nevertheless different kinds of nature imagery.

Ultimately we aim to illuminate what makes the likeness of men to leaves an effective response to Diomedes' boasting threats.⁵ The tone of Glaucus' simile is variously interpreted. The simile certainly feels pensive at first glance because of its content; Glaucus is thinking about death, after all. There is a lapidary finality to φύλλα τὰ μέν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει "Some leaves the wind pours to the ground." Puny mortals cannot fight against the awesome force of the wind.⁶ The detached quality of Glaucus' speech has led a few scholars to believe that this simile was shoehorned into a context to which it is ill-fitted (Davison, 1968 [1955]: 73; West, 1997: 365). Yet the simile is better interpreted as a threat, as Martin (1989) and Scodel (1992) have argued. Martin summarizes the thrust of the simile in this way: "But Glaukos is using the language of elegy for darker purposes: this is also a coded threat; in the language of Homer,

⁵ To focus on aggressiveness is not the only tack to take. One fruitful line of interpretation ties this simile to its context and seeks to unite the simile with Book 6. Such connections take varied forms. Morpurgo (1927) connects the theme of family that appears in the simile (γενεή, 145) with the conversation between Hector and Andromache about Astyanax. Scholars have also shown how the Glaucus simile connects to the rest of Glaucus' speech. Gaiser (1969), for example, shows how Glaucus shapes the story of Bellerophon to fit the theme of his simile. Glaucus omits the fact that Bellerophon was of divine stock and neglects to explain why Bellerophon incurred the hatred of the gods in order to underscore that mortals suffer because of circumstances beyond their control, the theme of the leaf-simile.

⁶ As this simile is conventionally interpreted, the wind that severs the leaves from the branches blows in autumn (so Broccia, 1963: 86, Griffith, 1975: 81, Maftai, 1976: 21, Fornaro, 1992: 32, and Grethlein, 2006a: 85). This implies, then, that all leaves die at the end of the season, just as all mortals have to die at the end of their days.

falling to the ground connotes the end of human as well as vegetal life (cf. the images of warriors as trees)” (128).⁷ Scodel, while critical of Martin’s analysis in some particulars, develops the idea that the simile expresses a threat to explain the unequal exchange of armor.⁸

We may take Martin’s brief interpretation of the simile as a starting point for our own analysis of this scene. We shall examine the leap Martin makes in his parenthetical comment about leaf imagery linking falling trees to falling leaves. Many scholars, including Fränkel (1977 [1921]) and Grethlein (2006a), have united the imagery of falling trees with falling leaves. Grethlein, for example, unites them under the terms “Naturvergleiche und –metaphorn” (87).⁹ Indeed, a term like “natural imagery” smoothes out potential differences and may have led interpreters to adopt too monochromatic a view of this subtle imagery. And what is more, because leaves and trees often appear in the same images in Homer, it is easy, perhaps, to lump together trees with leaves, and thereby overlook these essential differences. Yet our analysis will

⁷ There is a presentiment in Martin’s phrasing, of the argument that he would develop more fully in his article “Similes and Performance” (1997). Martin implies that the language of elegy differs from the language of epic, just as similes use different language and play a role different and separable from the rest of epic.

⁸ Scodel concludes that the peculiar exchange shows Zeus at his most capricious, underlining the idea that divine support does not last forever for any hero and that the gods can shift their allegiances suddenly.

⁹ Fränkel (1977 [1921]: 35-41) discusses leaf likenesses in the last section of his *Bäume und Pflanzen* category. Susanetti (1999) makes a similar link between leaves and trees: both are images “tratt[e] dal mondo vegetale” (103). Scott (1974), by contrast, analyzes tree similes and the leaf similes which express countlessness in completely different groups. Tree similes are in section 5 (70-71), and leaf similes are grouped with flowers and sand in section 17, a miscellaneous fragmentary group (80-81).

highlight critical differences between trees and leaves, differences that lead to different conceptions of the human condition, of heroism, and of poetic remembrance.¹⁰

The difference between trees and leaves arises from the fact that trees are much hardier than leaves. Specifically, leaves are always vulnerable to the wind (as in *Il.* 6.147: τὰ μὲν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει) while among trees only young saplings, like the olive to which Euphorbus is compared at *Il.* 17.51-60, face a genuinely “mortal” threat from wind, as we showed in Ch. 2 above (pp. 70-71). Because leaves are so fragile the narrator is disinclined to use them in heroic comparisons because his goal is to praise heroes for their strength and endurance. Leaves make bad symbols for commemoration because their very countlessness presents a serious challenge to the epic poet whose aim is to remember each hero distinctly. Despite these challenges, the narrator does not totally avoid making men-as-leaf comparisons or refrain from mentioning leaves. In the narrator’s hands, leaves are vehicles to express the health and vigor of the trees on which they grow. In the same vein, the narrator can compare an immense group of soldiers to leaves and use that comparison to make vivid a genuine threat.

Men-as-leaf likenesses are much more at home in character speech where the intimations of fragility, countlessness (and the anonymity resulting from it), and uselessness of leaves readily form material for insults. When Glaucus uses a leaf simile to insult Diomedes, he follows the narrative patterns employed by characters in direct speech, not those of the narrator pertaining to this imagery.

¹⁰ Purves (2010b: 225) has recently begun the project of teasing apart the separate but interrelated poetic associations engendered by trees and leaves: “Trees and their leaves, therefore, can be said to engender both epic impulses: the countable (as expressed through the catalogue; or the individual moment of death on the battlefield) and the uncountable (the unquantifiable number of leaves that take us beyond the limits of human vision and knowledge in Homer).”

LEAF SIMILES IN HOMER

There are only four passages besides the Glaucus simile in which human beings are directly compared to leaves. Leaves are also mentioned as an attribute of trees in Homer, but that is a separate situation, which we will treat below. Most criticism on these passages suggests that the narrator likens men to leaves to show the essential fragility of the human condition.¹¹ Yet it is more apt to say that this leaf imagery in the narrator's hands is multivalent: while it is true that the narrator considers the task of counting leaves daunting and recuses himself from the challenge, the narrator also uses the imagery of leaves to evoke the vigorous intensity of a mass of fighting soldiers.

1) THE NARRATOR'S LEAF SIMILES CONVEY VIGOR

That Homer uses leaf similes to describe large numbers of men is well-known.¹² *Il.*

2.464-468, 2.800-801, and *Od.* 9.51-53 have been adduced to make this point:

ὥς τῶν ἔθνεα πολλὰ νεῶν ἄπο καὶ κλισιάων
ἐς πεδῖον προχέοντο Σκαμάνδριον· αὐτὰρ ὑπὸ χθών
σμερδαλέον κονάβιζε ποδῶν αὐτῶν τε καὶ ἵππων.
ἔσταν δ' ἐν λειμῶνι Σκαμανδρίῳ ἀνθεμόεντι
μυριοί, ὅσα τε φύλλα καὶ ἄνθεα γίγνεται ὥρηι.

In this way [like birds] many groups from the ships and the huts were pouring forward to the Scamandrian plain; then the earth got frightfully dusty underneath their feet and the feet of their horses. And they stood upon the flowering Scamandrian meadow, in their many thousands, as many as there are leaves and flowers in springtime. (2.464-468)

λίην γὰρ φύλλοισιν εἰκότες ἢ ψαμάθοισιν
ἔρχονται πεδίοιο μαχησόμενοι προτὶ ἄστυ.

For the Achaeans, very much like leaves or grains of sand, come over the plain toward the citadel to fight. (2.800-801)

¹¹ See most recently Susannetti (1999) and Grethlein (2006a and 2006b).

¹² Fränkel (1977 [1921]: 40), Scott (1974: 80-81), Lowry (1995: 198), Purves (2010b: 225-226).

ἦλθον ἔπειθ' ὅσα φύλλα καὶ ἄνθεα γίγνεται ὥρη,
ἥεριοι· τότε δὴ ῥα κακὴ Διὸς αἴσα παρέστη
ἡμῖν αἰνομόροισιν, ἵν' ἄλγεα πολλὰ πάθοιμεν.

And [the Cicones] then came, as many as are leaves and flowers in springtime,
in the early morning; then the fate from Zeus stood bad
for us wretches that we suffer many pains. (9.51-53)

Since only the first of these similes is, strictly speaking, in the narrator's voice, a clarification is in order at the outset. Iris voices the second simile as she reports to Hector that the Achaeans are marching to battle which is what the narrator sees. The third passage comes from Odysseus' *Apologoi* and describes the attack of the Cicones. This is a moment when Odysseus speaks like the narrator because he uses this leaf image just as the narrator does at *Il.* 2.465-468.¹³ Fränkel (1977 [1921]: 40) describes the connection of leaves to number in these passages as the "simplest" level of the likeness compared with the Glaucus passage, but we see that these likenesses convey more than just big numbers.¹⁴ The mass of soldiers moving in unison inspires fear (hence the urgency in Iris' report to Hector) and ultimately conveys that the soldiers move aggressively. These leaf similes describe living groups, and living groups alone: we see they are used twice in the *Iliad* for the Achaean army, and in the *Odyssey* for the Cicones, and for the energetic Phaeacian women (*Od.* 7.103-107), who efficiently mill grain and weave.¹⁵ When, on the other hand, Homer has occasion to describe large numbers of non-living things, like Agamemnon's immense reparations which Achilles rejects during the embassy scene, he likens

¹³ The connection between the style of Odysseus' *Apologoi* and that of the NF₁ has been variously interpreted. For discussion of Odysseus as a poet-figure, see Ch. 1 (pp. 25-26). Suerbaum (1999 [1968]) argues that Odysseus' style closely resembles the narrator while de Jong (1992) points out the subjective elements of diction and style that, she feels, connect the *Apologoi* more closely with character speech.

¹⁴ "In solchen einfachsten Fällen dürfen wir sagen: der Vergleichungspunkt ist die Fülle, die Menge" (40).

¹⁵ Individual heroes are never explicitly likened to single leaves in Homer, in my view because they are so fragile.

the offered gifts to grains of sand or dust (οὐδ' εἴ μοι τόσα δοίη ὅσα ψάμαθός τε κόνις τε, *Il.* 9.385).

To appreciate the difference between the comparison of living men to leaves and of the gifts to sand, we can compare Iris' report of the charging army with Achilles' speech in *Iliad* 9. Iris likens the Achaean army both to leaves and to grains of sand at *Il.* 2.800 while Achilles compares the number of gifts to sand or dust. The key difference, then, is that Iris uses a living image for a living body of soldiers while Achilles' sand and dust connote death.¹⁶ Both situations present the problem of how the poet represents large numbers and they illustrate the poetic consequences of these moments on the themes of heroism and remembrance. Iris likens the Achaean army to leaves, underlining with the image the vigorous power of the oncoming army, in order to warn Hector of the imminent danger, and following closely the inclination of the narrator to use imagery that glorifies the Achaeans. Achilles, on the other hand, avoids honoring Agamemnon's offer with a simile that gives it a lively, vigorous sheen; he stays away from leaves and compares the offer to lifeless sand and dust. The mention of dust here is pointed, and it brings before the mind's eye the deaths of minor warriors, an image opposite to that of vigorous marching.¹⁷ In the course of rejecting Agamemnon's offer, Achilles contrasts

¹⁶ To be fair, Iris does compare the soldiers to sand as well. I do not see a deliberate contrast between living and non-living vehicles in Iris' speech as I do in Achilles'. Big numbers are proverbially as large as the number of grains of sand on a beach. Cf. Latacz (2010: 260 *ad.* 2.800) and West (1997: 245) who discuss similar imagery in Near Eastern sources and the Bible (esp. *Joshua* 11.4, of an attacking enemy army).

¹⁷ Achilles hints at such formulaic phrases as κόνις δεδραγμένος αἵματοέσσης ("grasping the bloody dust," *Il.* 13.393 = 16.486), which Homer uses when Asius and Sarpedon lay dying, having fallen like tall pines. In these two passages we see an explicit contrast between living plants and dead dust. With the semantically identical κόνιη we find such repeated phrases as ἤριπε δ' ἐν κόνιῃς ("he fell in the dust," *Il.* 5.75, 11.742, 22.330), ὃ δ' ὕπτιος ἐν κόνιῃσιν ("[he fell down] on his back in the dust," 4.522, 13.548, 15.434, 16.289), ὃ δ' ἐν κόνιῃσι πεσὼν ἔλε γαῖαν ἀγοστῶι ("having fallen in the dust, he gripped the earth with his palm," *Il.* 11.425,

these numberless but essentially “dead” gifts with the fragility of one man’s life, which, unlike a gift, cannot be restored to its owner once he loses it (*ἀνδρὸς δὲ ψυχὴ πάλιν ἐλθεῖν οὔτε λεῖσθή / οὔθ’ ἐλετή, ἐπεὶ ἄρ κεν ἀμείψεται ἔρκος ὀδόντων*, “But the life of a man cannot be taken as spoil nor can it be grasped, to return again, once it leaves the barrier of the teeth,” 9.408-409).¹⁸ Achilles counters Agamemnon’s boundless offer with the claim that a life is more valuable than any heap of gifts because a life cannot be replaced once it is lost. Nor, of course, would it make poetic sense for Achilles to compare the soul of a man to a single leaf because, although a leaf is a living thing, it is essentially powerless and insignificant, not well-fitted to a heroic boast. Achilles rejects as insignificant Agamemnon’s countless gifts by suppressing leaf imagery and substituting in its place the lifeless imagery of sand and dust. Yet death weighs on Achilles’ mind: in his next sentence the hero goes on to declare that his mother Thetis presented him a choice between a long insignificant life and a short glorious one. Though Achilles will indeed die at Troy, he will win for himself a *κλέος ἄφθιτον* (9. 413), a fame that will never decay, the specifically vegetal resonances of which Nagy has traced (1999 [1979]: 175-189). In this Book 9 passage we see again an example of Achilles’ creative use of traditional natural imagery, a phenomenon we explored at length in our previous chapter.

13.508, 13.520, 14.452, 17.315; cf. 2.418), *χαμαὶ πέσον ἐν κονίησιν* (“they fell to the earth in the dust,” 5.583; cf. 4.482, 5.588, 6.453, 8.156, 12.23, 13.205, 14.418, 15.423, 17.428), *καὶ δ’ ἔπεσ’ ἐν κονίησι μακῶν* (“it fell down in the dust, bellowing,” usually of animals, as at *Il.* 16.469, *Od.* 10.163, and *Od.* 19.454, but also of the wounded Iros, *Od.* 18.98), and *κάρη κονίησιν ἐμίχθη* (“his head rolled in the dust, *Il.* 10.457, *Od.* 22.329). Homer also often links dust with bloodshed, and thereby with death: (*Il.* 163-164, 15.118, 16.639, 16.796, and *Od.* 22.353).

¹⁸ In a sense, Achilles makes the same point about Agamemnon’s gifts in Book 9 as he made about Agamemnon’s scepter in Book 1. Both the scepter and the gifts are vain and unpersuasive because they are dead.

Since vigorousness comes through so strongly in these comparisons, we can conclude that leaf imagery, at least in part, conveys strength, that is, the strength of a united group. There is no suggestion of weakness in Iris' description of the Achaean army: she is, after all, warning Hector of the approach of the energized Achaeans. Further, when Odysseus likens the Cicones to leaves, he mentions in the following line the bad luck he suffered at the time in his wandering: *ἡμῖν αἰνομόροισιν* "us wretches" (*Od.* 9.53). Although Odysseus survives his encounter with the Cicones, he thinks of it as a loss when he tells the story to the Phaeacians: *καὶ τότε δὴ Κίκονες κλῖναν δαμάσαντες Ἀχαιοὺς*, "At that time the Cicones overpowered and routed the Achaeans, *Od.* 9.59). That the Cicones were strong enough to defeat and demoralize a hero like Odysseus and his companions is a testament to their strength as a group. In the *Odyssey* passage, then, the numerousness of the enemy, portrayed through the image of the leaves in springtime, adds to the Cicones' might. The soldiers, at their peak of their vigor, can overwhelm an Achaean hero, even one as prominent as Odysseus.

2) LEAF SIMILES SYMBOLIZE ANONYMITY

While the narrator's simile at *Il.* 2.465-468 announces the threat posed by the immense catalogue of Achaeans, scholars have also rightly read more pessimistic themes in it. Fornaro (1992: 31) perceives the theme of death in the similes describing the Achaean army in addition to the number theme since the soldiers are doomed to die. She also develops the idea of immense numerousness, interestingly comparing the similes from Book 2 with the invocation to the Muses before the Achaean catalogue. She points out that, since the poet cannot name every soldier individually and must use similes instead, these soldiers will die unnamed and undifferentiated. These soldiers, then, will not achieve their heroic potential and win *κλέος* because they remain unnamed. Anonymity, then, follows necessarily from numerousness, and this anonymity has

important poetic and social consequences for the project of epic.¹⁹ Such huge numbers of Achaean soldiers test the limits of the mortal singer (so Purves, 2010b: 225). The narrator uses the simile to gesture to the group as a whole, but the simile cannot commemorate the life and death of an individual with the specificity that a tree simile can. By contrast, Simoesius' poplar simile (*Il.* 4.473-489) is affixed to a fairly full account of his short life: his birth by the banks of the river (473-477), the recompense he did not have the chance to repay (478), and his wounding and death in battle (478-479).

The reasons why the soldiers in Book 2 get less individual attention from the narrator can be gleaned from the surrounding context, specifically from the invocation to the Muses before the Catalogue of Ships. There the narrator expresses his concern to fully preserve the memory of the heroes by naming them; the rest he is content to leave unnamed (cf. *Il.* 2.484-488: ἔσπετε νῦν μοι...οἳ τινες ἡγεμόνες Δαναῶν καὶ κοίρανοι ἦσαν. / πληθὺν δ' οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω "Tell me now...who the leaders and commanders of the Danaans were. I could not declare or name the multitude"). On this reading, then, the leaders are worth naming, the rest—less heroic—do not meet this standard. The suggestion that someone deserves to remain anonymous becomes, in the mouth of his opponent, an insult to any Homeric hero.²⁰ This anonymity is a kind of symbolic powerlessness analogous to the essential fragility of leaves in nature. Grethlein (2006a) argues that Glaucus' theme is the helplessness of mortals against chance, depicted symbolically in the simile by the destructive force of the wind. Just as a leaf

¹⁹ Cf. Vernant (1996 [1981]: 56): "For the Greeks, to exist 'as an individual' meant to make oneself, and to remain, 'memorable'...It is epic verse, as oral poetry, that is chiefly instrumental in maintaining his continuous presence within the group. By celebrating the exploits of the heroes of years gone by, it performs throughout the Greek world, the function of a collective memory."

²⁰ Harries (1993: 139) and Lowry (1995: 199) apply this idea to the Glaucus simile, and Lowry particularly sketches how Glaucus uses the theme of anonymity against Diomedes in their rhetorical contest.

lacks the strength to endure gusts of wind, in the same way, a weaker hero lacks the strength to make a name for himself and achieve a κλέος ἄφθιτον.

3) CHARACTERS' LEAF SIMILES IN HOMER

Apart from Glaucus' simile in *Iliad* 6 there is another leaf simile-in-speech to which we should look to see more distinctly the haughty contempt that this imagery connotes. At *Il.*

21.462-467 Apollo characterizes mortals as wretched due to the inevitable fluctuations in their strength:

Ἐννοσίγαι', οὐκ ἄν με σαόφρονα μυθήσαιο
ἔμμεναι, εἰ δὴ σοί γε βροτῶν ἔνεκα πτολεμίσσω
δειλῶν, οἳ φύλλοισιν εἰκότες ἄλλοτε μέν τε
ζαφλεγέες τελέθουσιν, ἀρούρης καρπὸν ἔδοντες,
ἄλλοτε δὲ φθινύθουσιν ἀκήριοι. ἀλλὰ τάχιστα
παυσώμεσθα μάχης, οἳ δ' αὐτοὶ δηριαάσθων.

Earth-shaker, you would not assert that I am sensible
if I fight with you for the sake of mortals,
wretches, who like leaves at one moment
flourish full of life, eating the crop of the field,
and at another moment decay, lifeless. But as quick as we can
let's stop from battle; and let them destroy each other.

We can contrast what Apollo says here with *Od.* 9.51-53 where Odysseus compares the Cicones to leaves in their numerousness:

ἦλθον ἔπειθ' ὅσα φύλλα καὶ ἄνθεα γίγνεται ὥρη,
ἥριοι· τότε δὴ ῥα κακὴ Διὸς αἴσα παρέστη
ἡμῖν αἰνομόροισιν, ἵν' ἄλγεα πολλὰ πάθοιμεν.

And [the Cicones] then came, as many as are leaves and flowers in springtime,
in the early morning; then the fate from Zeus stood bad
for us wretches that we suffer many pains.

The lucklessness of mortals is the theme common to these otherwise opposite passages

(αἰνομόροισιν—δειλῶν). While Odysseus suffers bad luck because Zeus has put against him a vigorous army, likened to leaves, which *inflicts* death upon his companions, Apollo says that mortals suffer because they, like leaves and unlike the gods, can lose their vigor, whether by *suffering* death in battle or by aging. In the poems, then, leaves have a paradoxical quality that

mirrors the human condition. They are both full of vigorous life and at the same moment subject to destruction. This quality of humanity is expressed here in a carefully balanced chiasmus, with a detached sense of irony, by Apollo: ἄλλοτε μέν τε / ζαφλεγέες τελέθουσιν... ἄλλοτε δὲ φθινύθουσιν ἀκήριοι.²¹ Because Apollo is a god and cannot die, he cannot sympathize with or understand the human condition. Apollo haughtily declares that gods are superior because their strength does not wane with time. The fragility of leaves encapsulates the essential weakness of humans compared with gods. These are sentiments that Glaucus draws upon to disparage his opponent Diomedes.

MEN, LEAVES, AND TREES

Now that we have discussed the similes comparing leaves to men, we turn to the incidental mentions of leaves in Homer's text. Since trees and leaves often appear together in the same passages (because leaves grow on trees), we will be able here to determine more precisely what the mention of leaves contributes to a tree image. In these incidental mentions of leaves, we perceive the same tension we have perceived in the similes proper between vigorous life and palpable vulnerability. On the one hand, a leafy tree is a healthy tree, but on the other hand leaves are themselves fragile and too numerous to be remembered individually.

Leaves convey much more, however, the themes of fragility and vulnerability than trees do—for two reasons. First, as we saw in Ch. 2, cutting trees down proves a challenge, which, if met, is worthy of glory and remembrance. The poet celebrates the achievement of the victorious (and, as it happens, Achaean) woodcutter because in killing his adversary he demonstrates strength, skill, and tenacity. The second reason why trees do not bring across this fragility in the

²¹ Both clauses consist of a verb with an adjective. The meanings of noun and adjective are reversed in the second clause. The order reverses, too, shifting from adjective-verb in the first clause to verb-adjective in the second clause. Schematically, we can illustrate it like this: ADJ VB :: -VB -ADJ.

same way as leaves do is that the wood from a fallen tree will oftentimes be turned by artistic skill into something useful, like a ship-timber or a chariot wheel, which will last long after the tree is killed. It is a consolation that out of an act of killing can be born some longer-lasting cultural product through which the tree may be remembered. But leaves offer no glory to whoever destroys them. Indeed, a random and uncontrollable force like wind can blow a leaf down (*ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει*, *Il.* 6.147) whereas it takes brains, not brawn, to fell a tree, as Nestor explains to Antilochus: *μήτι τοι δρυτόμος μέγ' ἀμείνων ἤ ἐ βίηφι* “A woodcutter has much more cunning intelligence than brute force” (*Il.* 23.315). Because obliterating a leaf is so much easier than felling a tree, less glory accrues to a leaf-destroyer than to a woodcutter. Moreover, leaves have no technological uses that would lead them to be remembered. Though piles of leaves can provide shelter, only animals, and men pushed out of culture and into a wild state of nature, to the absolute limits of exhaustion and despair, use them for this purpose. Leaves represent what is “natural” about the tree, and they play no part in “culture.” They have, therefore, no share in protecting *κλέος* (as *κλέος* is a cultural institution); it is not in their nature to preserve the memory of heroic feats, as we have explored above in our discussion of Achilles’ response to Agamemnon’s embassy. Given all this, when the poet likens the death of heroes to leaves, we find that with the shift in imagery comes a corresponding shift in perspective towards death. Leaves suggest a bleaker view of death than trees do.

1) LEAVES AS A MARKER OF A TREE’S HEALTH

The Homeric narrator shows off the leaves on trees in order to show that the tree is at the peak of health. The magic fig tree around Charybdis blooms luxuriantly with leaves to show its lasting liveliness: *φύλλοισι τεθελώς* (*Od.* 12.103). Furthermore, the poet’s epithets for places that mention leaves indicate the potential productive abundance of these places. Mt. Neritos on

Ithaca and Mt. Pelion in Thessaly, for instance, tremble with leaves (εἰνοσίφυλλον), signaling their vast forests (Neritos: *Il.* 2.632, *Od.* 9.22; Pelion: *Il.* 2.758, *Od.* 11.316). The semantically similar and metrically identical epithet ἀκριτόφυλλον (*Il.* 2.868) conveys that the forests on the mountains are so vast that even the narrator cannot comprehend them fully.²²

In the *Odyssey*, leafy trees have occasional connections with immortals, and the reason for this connection must lie in the fact that trees well-stocked with leaves are at the peak of their health and vigor. As Menelaus describes the shapes which the divinity Proteus took when they encountered, among the forms was a tree with a tall canopy of leaves (*Od.* 4.458): δένδρεον ὑψιπέτηλον.²³ Similarly, Zeus' prophetic oak at Dodona is a δρυὸς ὑψικόμοιο (*Od.* 14.328, 19.297) because his divine oracle possesses prophetic authority.

2) LEAVES AS A MARKER OF MORTAL VULNERABILITY

So far we have seen that leaves contribute vibrancy and strength to the subjects with which they are associated; we have seen that even divine power can, in a limited way, be depicted through the imagery of healthy, leafy plants. But mortals, too, are likened to trees, as we saw in our previous chapter. When these trees have leaves, the leaves show the tree to be healthy and the hero to be strong. But these leafy trees that represent heroes are regularly on the verge of being cut down. In such paradoxical cases, Homer mixes associations of strength and vulnerability in order to create a Janus-like image that captures the vigorousness and vulnerability of heroes simultaneously. Such images, therefore, highlight the contradictions of

²² The poet puts the theme of his own limits into the foreground in the Catalogue of Ships, where this epithet appears, most explicitly at 2.484-488). On the relationship between the epithets εἰνοσίφυλλος and ἀκριτόφυλλος, cf. Latacz (2010: 285-286 *ad* 2.867).

²³ Proper divinities are never likened to trees (understandably, because trees, as living things, die and gods are immortal). Proteus rather takes the appearance of a tree. Furthermore, he is rather a liminal figure here, straddling the line between gods and mortals. Cf. Stephanie West (1988: 218 *ad Od.* 4.385-6 on ἀθάνατος): “not otiose; Proteus is a lesser supernatural being, whose immortality might not be immediately assumed.”

heroic life—a life in its vigorous prime but ever subject to the calamity of death. Before we turn to the scenes of fallen trees that litter the battlefield, let us venture to the Homeric underworld where the poet offers us a mythological picture that effectively dramatizes this quandary of heroism. I speak of Tantalus (11.588-592):

δένδρεα δ' ὑψιπέτηλα κατὰ κρήθεν χέε καρπὸν,
ὄγχυαι καὶ ῥοιαὶ καὶ μηλέαι ἀγλαόκαρποι
συκκαί τε γλυκεραὶ καὶ ἐλαῖαι τηλεθώσαι·
τῶν ὁπότε' ἰθύσει' ὁ γέρων ἐπὶ χερσὶ μάσασθαι,
τὰς δ' ἄνεμος ῥίπτασκε ποτὶ νέφεα σκιόεντα.

And lofty-leaved trees poured fruit upon Tantalus's head,
pear trees and pomegranate trees and apple trees with fine fruit
and sweet fig trees and flourishing olive trees;
when the old man stretched out with his hands to seize them,
these the wind always snatched toward the shadowy clouds.

The irony here, as Odysseus describes it, is that famished Tantalus, surrounded by agricultural abundance on every side, is not allowed to eat. This supernatural abundance is depicted through the catalogue of fruit trees and diction such as *τηλεθώσαι* (590), *ἀγλαόκαρποι* (589), and *καρπὸν* (588), as well as *ὑψιπέτηλα* (588).²⁴ But what ought to be comfortable and appealing (*γλυκεραί*, 590) proves to be torment because of a countervailing current in this passage.

Tantalus' diet (ironically, given his crime) dooms him, and his punishment, like Prometheus' in Hesiod's *Theogony*, defines the line between gods and mortals through diet.²⁵ This vivid torture scene presents concretely the limits fixed for mortals that Diomedes and Apollo speak about in the *Iliad* (*οἱ ἀρούρης καρπὸν ἔδουσιν*, *Il.* 6.142 ≈ 21.465).²⁶

²⁴ Homer uses the same lines when describing Alcinous' orchard (*Od.* 7.115-116).

²⁵ Cf. Vernant (1988), esp. 194-5, 196-7, on the fact that human beings differ from gods because they must work the fields in order to gather food from the earth.

²⁶ It is regularly noted that the Book 6 and Book 21 passages both mark the difference in status between gods and mortals (Gaisser, 1969: 173; Griffith, 1975: 77; Scodel, 1992: 77; Grethlein

The Tantalus scene contains a further revealing parallel in diction with our two main leaf passages in *Iliad* 6 and 21. The trees pour fruit down upon his head (588): κατὰ κρήθεν χέε καρπόν. The connotations of χέε here straddle the line between abundance and dearth. On the one hand, these fruit trees show a limitless and supernatural productivity as they are constantly producing fruit (the imperfect tense of the verb indicates repeated or continuous aspect). χέε, like προχέοντο “[the soldiers] were pouring forth,” at *Il.* 2.466, can express vigorousness. The tree must be full of life to be capable of producing so much fine fruit so often. At the same time, χέε also connotes falling, which is tantamount to death for Homeric heroes.²⁷ Though the scene is set in the Underworld, the House of Death, Tantalus suffers hunger and thirst, afflictions that trouble only the living. Another connection to Glaucus’ speech in *Iliad* 6 is forged by the wind which blows the fruit and branches away from Tantalus as he reaches for them (11.592). Just as the wind blows the leaves to the ground in Glaucus’ simile, the wind blows the nourishing fruit which represents vigorous abundance away from Tantalus. It must not be coincidence that Tantalus is described as an old man γέρων (591); because he gains no rejuvenating nourishment from the fruit, he cannot be young. Finally, the fact that Tantalus has aged also marks the line between human beings and gods because the gods are ageless and immortal forever, unlike mortals.

(2006a: 88). That the specific phrase ἀρούρης καρπὸν ἔδουντες marks this line, see Grethlein (2006b: 11).

²⁷ On the connection between falling and death, see above, note 17, and Purves (2006). χέω itself is used to describe the spreading of the mist of death (*Il.* 5.696, 16.344; *Od.* 22.88), of θάνατος (death) itself spreading (*Il.* 13.544, 16.414, 16.580), of a horseman’s reins slackening when he dies (*Il.* 17.619), and of a dying soldier’s guts spilling (*Il.* 4.526, 21.181). χέω is also the verb used of heaping earth into a burial mound (*Il.* 6.419, 7.86, 7.366, 22.45, 23.256, 23.257, 24.799, 24.801; *Od.* 1.291, 2.222, 3.258, 4.584, 11.75, 12.14, 24.81).

This scene, then, interacts in a complex way with passages of the *Iliad*, and comments obliquely on the human condition. Just as Tantalus exists in a state between life and death, so, too, do the rest of mortals, and particularly Homeric heroes. The imagery of trees and leaves helps the poet to illustrate this complex liminal state, since leaves can represent both flourishing life and barren, empty death.

In the *Iliad* the felling of leafy trees spells death for heroes. The narrator describes the leaves on trees that are about to fall, whether as part of a tree simile or in the course of the main narrative. For instance, when the Achaeans cut wood for Patroclus' pyre, the leaves on the oaks earn a mention (*Il.* 23.117-120):

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ κνημοὺς προσέβαν πολυπίδακος Ἰδης,
αὐτίκ' ἄρα δρῦς ὑψικόμους ταναήκεϊ χαλκῶι
τάμνον ἐπειγόμενοι· τὰ δὲ μεγάλα κτυπέουσαι
πίπτον.

And when they reached the dells of Ida with many glens,
straightaway they eagerly cut lofty-leafy oaks with their sharp-bladed bronze,
and the oaks, struck hard, fell.

The adjective ὑψικόμους refers to the oaks' leaves.²⁸ The diction is interesting because it betrays a trace of anthropomorphism because κόμη, strictly speaking, means "hair."²⁹ This anthropomorphism hints at something more than the fall of an oak tree; it suggests the death of a hero as well. The diction evokes a second time the death of Patroclus.

The narrator creates a particularly stark contrast between life and death by mentioning flourishing leaves in the tree similes that appear when heroes die. A good example is the ash-tree simile that accompanies the death of Imbrius (13.177-181):

²⁸ The epithet appears also at *Il.* 14.398, at *Od.* 12.357, 14.328, 19.297 and at *Od.* 9.186 (curiously, of wood that has been fashioned into the Cyclops' courtyard).

²⁹ κόμη appears thirteen times in Homer. Only in a single instance does the word refer to a tree's foliage: *Od.* 23.195: καὶ τότε ἔπειτ' ἀπέκοψα κόμην τανυφύλλου ἐλαίης "And I [Odysseus] cut off the head of the tapering-leaved olive tree."

τόν ῥ' υἱὸς Τελαμῶνος ὑπ' οὔατος ἔγχεϊ μακρῶι
 νύξ', ἐκ δ' ἔσπασεν ἔγχος· ὃ δ' αὐτ' ἔπεσεν μελίη ὥς,
 ἣ τ' ὄρεος κορυφῇ ἔκαθεν περιφαινομένοιο
 χαλκῶι ταμνομένη τέρενα χθονὶ φύλλα πελάσσει.
 ὥς πέσεν, ἀμφὶ δέ οἱ βράχε τεύχεα ποικίλα χαλκῶι.

The son of Telemon struck Imbrius behind the ear
 with his big spear, and he drew the spear out; and Imbrius fell
 like an ash tree, which, from afar on the brow of a conspicuous mountain
 touches its sap-filled leaves to the ground when cut by the bronze:
 in this way he fell, and about him thundered his arms adorned with bronze.

Two aspects of the diction of this passage merit particular attention. First is *χθονί* (180), which echoes the simile from Glaucus' speech in which the leaves pour to the ground (*ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει*, 6.147), the action that symbolizes the death of one generation of mortals. Here the narrator uses a similar action to illustrate the death of the hero. The narrator achieves the strong contrast between life and death through the adjective *τέρενα* (180). *τέρενα*, the second interesting piece of diction in this passage, is striking for its range as an adjective. *τερήν* denotes "roundness," as of tears,³⁰ and the life-filled vigor of leaves and flowers.³¹ This vigor also informs the sense in which the adjective applies to the healthy skin or flesh of heroes (*LfgrE s.v. τερήν* B.1; cf.

Cunliffe, *s.v.* [2]).³²

³⁰ Vivante (1982: 117) suggestively connects emotionalism to this word that describes shape: "A tear has its momentary bulk. It gathers into full, rounded form before it vanishes." To Vivante, it appears, the trajectory of a tear's existence closely resembles the trajectory of a hero's life, doomed to die at the peak of his physical perfection.

³¹ *LfgrE s.v. τερήν* B.2: *glänzend...kaum zart* (cf. Cunliffe (1963) *s.v.* (3) "of vegetation, swelling with sap, full of fresh life"). In addition to the leaves of the ash, *τερήν* also describes the leaves of the oak which Odysseus' companions cut before they feast on the Cattle of the Sun (*Od.* 12.357). The adjective is also used of the blooming grass upon which the Cyclops's ram is accustomed to feed (*Od.* 9.449).

³² The word appears in this sense three times: *Il.* 4.237, 13.553, 14.406. In these passages the heroes' skin explicitly remains inviolate. Try as they might the Trojans cannot even graze the skin of Nestor's son Antilochus because Poseidon deflects missiles from him (13.554-555). Similarly Hector cannot touch Ajax because the hero's two baldrics protect him (14.405-406). Both heroes remain vibrantly alive, with all the vigor of flourishing leaves. The passage in Book

A leafy tree is the setting for a lament over a premature death at *Od.* 19.518-524:

ὥς δ' ὅτε Πανδαρέου κόρυς, χλωρῆς ἀηδών,
καλὸν αἰεῖδουσιν ἔαρος νέον ἱσταμένοιο,
δενδρέων ἐν πετάλοισι καθεζομένη πυκινοῖσιν,
ἥ τε θαμὰ τρωπῶσα χέει πολυηχέα φωνήν,
παῖδ' ὀλοφυρομένη Ἴτυλον φίλον, ὃν ποτε χαλκῷ
κτείνει δι' ἀφραδίας, κοῦρον Ζήθοιο ἄνακτος,
ὥς καὶ ἐμοὶ δίχα θυμὸς ὀρώρεται ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα,

As when the daughter of Pandareus, the greenwood nightingale,
sings a lovely song when spring is just starting,
sitting in the thick leaves of trees,
who, modulating her notes quickly, pours out a loud-sounding voice
grieving for her dear son Itylus, whom once with the bronze
she killed senselessly, the son of lord Zethus:
in this way my [Penelope's] heart churns this way and that way.

Like Imbrius struck by Ajax's bronze in the *Iliad* (13.177-181), Itylus is slain by bronze here (522). Again, intimations of death also come through in the verb χέει, that verb especially resonant of death in Glaucus' simile.³³ The explicitly mentioned timing of this simile—spring (519)—connects this passage even more closely with Glaucus' simile (ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίνεται ὥρηνι “[the leaves] grow again in the season of spring,” *Il.* 6.148). Amidst so much imagery of ill-timed death—autumn, not spring, being the right season for creatures to die—the leaves of the tree on which the nightingale sits grow abundantly (πυκινοῖσιν, 520) in ironic contrast to the slaughter that is here narrated. This scene with its interesting combination of imagery well illustrates how leaves contribute to the ironic contrast between vigorous life and wasteful death that exemplifies the human condition.

4 is Eurymedon's boastful threat that birds devour the flesh of oath breakers. But such mutilation never actually happens in the *Iliad*.

³³ πολυηχής appears in only one other place—in the *Iliad* at 4.422 in the first simile that leads up to the start of battle (ἐν αἰγιαλῷ πολυηχεῖ κῦμα θαλάσσης “a wave on the loud-sounding beach of the sea”), a scene that anticipates such a great number of upcoming deaths.

We can generalize about the larger themes of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* from the fact that in the *Iliad*, all the trees specifically mentioned with leaves are deciduous species,³⁴ and that the lone evergreen species among these, the olive, appears prominently on Ithaca.³⁵ The olive tree by the Naiads' cave welcomes the hero when at last he achieves his *νόστος* and reaches Ithaca (*Od.* 13.102, 346). Towards the end of the *Odyssey*, the bedpost which Odysseus fashions out of the olive trunk is another important symbol of his homecoming.³⁶ The fact that the olive is evergreen contributes to the larger themes of the poem: the tree, evergreen and undying, just as it is also immovable, stands in for Odysseus' house and can also be connected to Penelope. Like the bedpost, the house and Penelope survive the suitors' threat. We can contrast the "deciduousness" of the *Iliad* to the "evergreenness" of Ithaca, and connect these observations to the themes of the epics. To generalize, the *Iliad* is about death, while the *Odyssey* is about survival. We can also build on Pucci's (1996) eloquent observation that death and survival in

³⁴ That is, when we examine the trees whose leaves the poet mentions explicitly, we discover that Homer refers only to the leaves of deciduous species in all cases save olive trees. Leaves are mentioned in relation to the ash tree to which the Trojan Imbrius is likened (*Il.* 13.180), to the oaks to which the armies are likened as they clash (*Il.* 14.398), to the oaks which the Achaeans cut down to construct Patroclus' funeral pyre (*Il.* 23.118), to the poplars whose leaves the hands Alcinous' servants are compared (*Od.* 7.106), the fruit trees (pear, pomegranate, apple, fig, and olive) that tempt Tantalus in the underworld (*Od.* 11.588-590), the fig tree growing above Charybdis' whirlpool (*Od.* 12.103), the oak which the companions cut before they feast on the Cattle of the Sun (*Od.* 12.357), the olive tree which grows near the Naiads' cave on Ithaca (*Od.* 13.102, 346), the prophetic oak sacred to Zeus at Dodona (*Od.* 14. 328, 19.297), and the olive tree out of which Odysseus fashions the bedpost (*Od.* 23. 195).

³⁵ The olive tree mentioned during the punishment of Tantalus is anomalous because it grows in the underworld, and itself appears as part of a prepackaged catalog of trees (*Od.* 11.589-590), according to Combellack (1965: 53). Cf. the identical *Od.* 7.115-116. Combellack remarks in particular that the olives are out of place in this passage not least because they are not good to eat fresh from the tree and concludes that the whole passage lifts the description of Alcinous' orchard in order to "provide temptation in its raw state" (53).

³⁶ This passage is the subject of Ch. 5 below.

these poems are often imagined as the destruction and preservation of trees. Pucci compares the spirit of the poems this way (17-18):

The son/*phyton* must not die as an *anêr*, but as a tree on his own soil, and taken care by the attention of the gardeners. The *Iliad*, in its most stern spirit, dislikes this agricultural image, since it is inconsistent with heroic death, and directly and indirectly debunks it by the elaborated equation of the heroic life with the corruptible life of nature and by the repeated similes that compare the fallen hero with the cut-down tree, or flower.

In the *Iliad* heroes die far from their native land, metaphorical trees displaced from their own soil. It is consistent with this spirit, then, that the leaves of the trees of the *Iliad* are deciduous, doomed by nature to fall annually. Ithaca, by contrast, offers the promise of a place where evergreen olive trees wait steadfastly for the hero's return.

3) THE USELESSNESS OF LEAVES ONCE FALLEN

We have already alluded to the uselessness of leaves, how they do not become anything lasting once they lose their grip on the branch that keeps them. To examine this notion in closer detail, let us turn to Achilles' oath on the scepter, which we discussed in detail in our previous chapter, and in which leaves play a prominent part. We must evaluate the contribution of these leaves in the passage, especially as they appear twice in close proximity to one another (*Il.*

1.233-239):

ἀλλ' ἔκ τοι ἐρέω καὶ ἐπὶ μέγαν ὄρκον ὁμοῦμαι —
ναὶ μὰ τόδε σκῆπτρον· τὸ μὲν οὐ ποτε φύλλα καὶ ὄζους
φύσει, ἐπεὶ δὴ πρῶτα τομήν ἐν ὄρεσσι λέλοιπεν,
οὐδ' ἀναθελήσει· περὶ γάρ ῥά ἐ χαλκὸς ἔλεψεν
φύλλά τε καὶ φλοιόν· νῦν αὐτέ μιν νῆες Ἀχαιῶν
ἐν παλάμῃς φορέουσι δικασπόλοι, οἳ τε θέμιστας
πρὸς Διὸς εἰρύαται· ὃ δέ τοι μέγας ἔσσεται ὄρκος —

But I will speak out and swear a great oath:
by this scepter, which will never grow leaves and shoots,
since it left its stump in the mountains,
and it will not bloom again; for the bronze stripped it of its
leaves and bark: now in turn the sons of the Achaeans,
the marshals, carry it in their hands, who protect the ordinances
of Zeus, and it will be a great oath:

The leaves represent, as they do in Glaucus' speech, this tree's generative potential. If we contrast the leaves in this passage to the simile in Book 6, we find that in Book 6 the leaves keep growing every year. As long as spring follows autumn, the generative energy of the blooming forest (ὔλη τηλεθόωσα φύει, 6.147-148) remains unexhausted and undiminished: the leaves always grow again in the following spring (ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίνεται ὥρηι, 6.148). From this perspective, Achilles' oath hinges on οὐ ποτε (1.234) because this phrase expresses that the chain of generation has snapped: the dead branch (tellingly, σκῆπτρον, 234) will never again make leaves and shoots grow (φύσει). The poet emphasizes this notion by enjambling the verb, fitting it into the prominent first position of the following line. The second instance of φύλλα in the oath is also enjambed for similar effect (237). φύλλά τε καὶ φλοιόν is similarly placed at verse initial, the phrase thereby separated from the line it goes with, to promote the sense of dislocation of the leaves and bark from the tree.³⁷ One further interesting sound effect is the alliteration of φύλλά and φλοιόν. The word φλοιός appears only here in the *Iliad*, and it may be used only to lay even more stress on the leaves.³⁸

We showed in the previous chapter that Achilles' oath differed substantially from the similes describing other mutilated trees in the *Iliad*'s battle books because Achilles suppressed the idea that the wood taken from the cut tree would be made into a useful and powerful artifact. His reason for doing this was to deny that the scepter gave Agamemnon any authority, in other words, to undermine this symbol of Agamemnon's abiding authority. Indeed, if craftsmen put the wood to good use, then the violence that destroyed the living tree will not have been in vain, not senseless or barbaric, but indeed civilized and even admirable.

³⁷ We discussed in detail the themes of separation and dislocation in our reading of this passage in the previous chapter. See pp. 41-42.

³⁸ Latacz (2002: 100 *ad* 1.237) notes the alliteration but does not speculate on any poetic effect.

How then does the mention of leaves contribute to Achilles' themes? Many passages in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* suggest that leaves have no cultural uses. They must be stripped and eliminated in order for the timber to become usable. For instance, when Odysseus explains to Penelope how he fashioned the post out of the olive tree growing through the middle of his bedroom, he speaks in some detail about how he had to trim the leaves as a part of his carpentry in order to turn the tree into a bedpost: *καὶ τότε ἔπειτ' ἀπέκοψα κόμην ταυνοφύλλου ἐλαίης* “And then I cut off the head of the tapering-leaved olive tree” (*Od.* 23.195). Similarly, in the *Iliad*, when the Achaeans sacrifice before they marshal for war, they strip branches of their leaves in order to make firewood (*Il.* 2. 425): *καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄρ' σχίζησιν ἀφύλλοισιν κατέκαιον* “And they [the Achaeans] burned the [thigh pieces] with pieces of firewood stripped of their leaves.” So men must dispose of leaves in order to create useful objects from trees.³⁹

The leaves, then, have no useful purpose in and of themselves for human beings. Animals take shelter under leaves, like the boar at *Od.* 19.440-44 which caused Odysseus' scar.⁴⁰ Human beings, however, resort to sleeping in leaves only when they are in dire straits. Anticleia's tale of Laertes' depressive misery shows how much the father pines for the absent son (*Od.* 11.187-194):

πατὴρ δὲ σὸς αὐτόθι μίμνει
 ἀγρῶ, οὐδὲ πόλινδε κατέρχεται· οὐδέ οἱ εὐναί
 δέμνια καὶ χλαῖναι καὶ ῥήγεα σιγαλόεντα,
 ἀλλ' ὃ γε χεῖμα μὲν εὔδει ὅθι δμῶες ἐνὶ οἴκῳ
 ἐν κόνι ἄγχι πυρός, κακὰ δὲ χροὶ εἵματα εἶται·
 αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν ἔλθῃσι θέρος τεθαλυῖά τ' ἀπώρη,
 πάντῃ οἱ κατὰ γουνὸν ἀλωῆς οἰνοπέδοιο
 φύλλων κεκλιμένων χθαμαλαὶ βεβλήσονται εὐναί·

³⁹ Similarly, when Odysseus' companions prepare their fateful sacrifice, they cut the leaves from the oak trees (*Od.* 12.357) instead of scattering barley.

⁴⁰ Menelaus, battling against the dispirited Trojans, is likened to an eagle pursuing hares, which try unsuccessfully to hide from the sharp-eyed bird of prey by taking cover under leafy bushes (*θάμνῳ ὕπ' ἀμφοκόμῳ κατακείμενος*, *Il.* 17. 677).

And your father stays there on his farm,
nor does he go down to the city; and he does not have a bed
and a blanket or shining sheets,
but during the winter he sleeps where the slaves sleep in the house
in the dust near the fire, and he wears bad clothes on his skin;
but when summer and the flourishing harvest-time comes,
everywhere throughout the knoll of his vineyard
low beds of fallen leaves are thrown down.

I quote this passage at length to show how Anticleia contrasts Laertes' present degradation with how he ought to live. The father of the king ought, Anticleia believes, to enjoy an active political and social life and not seclude himself in the country (187-188). He should sleep on a proper bed with sheets (188-189) and wear decent clothes (191). Instead, in all seasons but winter he sleeps outdoors on the hard ground, on leaves.⁴¹ He isolates himself from institutions of culture: in Anticleia's story the field where Laertes stays (*ἀγρῶ*) is contrasted with the city (*πόλινδε*) just as his listlessness (*μίμνει*) is contrasted with activity (*κατέρχεται*). Instead of traveling to the city (*πόλινδε*), Laertes stays in his own house (*οἴκῳ*).⁴² Homer frames Anticleia's story, therefore, by opposing nature against culture. Laertes has slipped out of culture into a state of nature. It is entirely fitting, then, that this desperate man sleeps on leaves, on a bed that is scarcely a bed.

Odysseus himself resorts to taking shelter under a pile of leaves on Scheria, improvising a bed for himself (*Od.* 5.486-487):

τὴν μὲν ἰδὼν γήθησε πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,
ἐν δ' ἄρα μέσση λέκτο, χύσιν δ' ἐπεχέυατο φύλλων.

And much enduring glorious Odysseus rejoiced when he saw it,
and laid down in the middle, and poured over the heap of leaves.

⁴¹ The verb *βεβλήται* (194) especially indicates the carelessness emblematic of Laertes in his grief.

⁴² The repetition of *ἐν* (190, 191) lays particular stress on Laertes' lethargy.

Odysseus takes this action only because he has no other choice. Hainsworth comments on the end of Book 5 by saying “It is the poet’s wish that the recovery of Odysseus’ fortunes shall begin from the lowest possible point” (288). That the hero must sleep in these leaves shows just how desperate, alone, and wretched he is.⁴³ When, later, he speaks of this night to Alcinous, he calls himself “grieved at heart.” In his abject exhaustion, he sleeps all night, past dawn until noon:

ἔνθα μὲν ἐν φύλλοισι, φίλον τετιημένος ἦτορ, / εὖδον παννύχιος καὶ ἐπ’ ἡῶ καὶ μέσον ἡμαρ·
(*Od.* 7.287-288).

Furthermore, the poet underscores the opposition between nature and culture at the end of Book 5, just as he does when Anticleia tells Odysseus about Laertes. The opposition comes to the fore through an unusual simile about a man living outdoors by himself (488-491):⁴⁴

ὥς δ’ ὅτε τις δαλὸν σποδιῇ ἐνέκρυψε μελαίνῃ
ἀγροῦ ἐπ’ ἐσχατιῇς, ὃ μὴ πάρα γείτονες ἄλλοι,
σπέρμα πυρὸς σώζων, ἵνα μὴ ποθεῖν ἄλλοθεν αὖτις,
ὥς Ὀδυσσεὺς φύλλοισι καλύψατο·

And just as when someone covers a firebrand with dark ash
at the edge of the country, beside whom are no other neighbors,
preserving the seed of fire so that he would not have to kindle a fire from elsewhere
in this way Odysseus covered himself with leaves.

The simile is set at the edge of a field (ἀγροῦ ἐπ’ ἐσχατιῇς, 489), where wild nature and cultivated land meet.⁴⁵ Nor does this lonely man have neighbors near him. The neighbors here correspond to the city that Laertes does not frequent on Ithaca. Now, while Laertes sinks into

⁴³ The poet also allows that the pile of leaves that Odysseus finds would provide decent shelter for two or three men caught in a winter storm (5.483-485). Together with this abjection, however, is the hope, represented by the seed of fire (σπέρμα πυρὸς σώζων, 5.490), which foreshadows Odysseus’ recovery.

⁴⁴ The simile is unusual because the elements of the simile do not map one-to-one onto Odysseus’ situation. In the simile both the lonely man and the firebrand stand for Odysseus (the ash stands, straightforwardly, for the leaves). Whatever further significance this orientation of simile to narrative may have is aside from my main point here—the opposition between nature and culture that this simile illustrates.

nature through neglect of himself brought on by grief and Odysseus has reached his low point through exhaustion brought on by intense physical exertion, the poet imagines the low itself in the same way. Both Laertes and Odysseus become separated from their cultural institutions. Both fall out of memory into nature, a fall which is represented by a pile of leaves.

GLAUCUS AND DIOMEDES

So far, then, we have shown how, although the narrator emphasizes the vigor of his heroes through leaf likenesses, this imagery tends to present a bleak view of heroic achievement. Because this imagery is so negative, characters like Apollo and Glaucus use it to disparage the martial achievements of human beings. We now turn to consider more closely the rhetoric behind the conversation between Diomedes and Glaucus. We seek to ascertain what the leaf imagery contributes to Glaucus' message and how it makes an effective response to Diomedes' threats, building particularly on the work of Martin (1989), Scodel (1992), Lowry (1995), and Pelliccia (2002), all of whom have particularly stressed how blame motivates the imagery. Glaucus shapes his words to respond to Diomedes' speech that opens the scene, as previous studies of the speech have shown.⁴⁶ He shows combat to be pointless in order to undermine Diomedes' bluster.

⁴⁵ Cf. Redfield (1994 [1975]: 189-192).

⁴⁶ Criticism of the encounter between Diomedes and Glaucus has mainly focused on the way Glaucus tells the story of Bellerophon. Gaisser (1969), for example, has shown how Glaucus modifies the story of Bellerophon which appears after the leaf simile in order to emphasize the theme that the gods are inscrutable to mortals, the theme of the simile. On her reading, this inscrutability counters the confident boasting in Diomedes' speech. Scodel (1992), building on Gaisser, argues that the whole scene demonstrates that divine support for both heroes is inconsistent. Diomedes may yet be punished by Aphrodite for wounding her in Book 5 while Zeus arbitrarily steals Glaucus' wits, causing him to make a bad trade of armor with Diomedes at the end of their parley.

Although the men-as-leaves similes are almost always restricted to direct speech, and the narrator refrains from using them, we can still find similes, like the storm simile at *Il.* 14.398-399, which are set in a martial context and which contain details of imagery similar to Glaucus' leaf simile:⁴⁷

οὐτ' ἄνεμος τόσσον γε περὶ δρυσὶν ὑψικόμοισιν
ἤπύει, ὅς τε μάλιστα μέγα βρέμεται χαλεπαίνων.

Nor does the wind roar so loud through the tall leafy oaks,
which as it rages roars very loudly.

This simile closely resembles the simile in Glaucus' speech because the same destructive agent, the wind, acts against the leafy oak branches. Significantly though, the leaves are only mentioned peripherally (*ὑψικόμοισιν*). The narrator does not say explicitly that the wind blows them to the earth since his main concern is to amplify the sound of the battle, not primarily to depict death and destruction, nor to introduce themes of fragility or insignificance to the battle scene. On the contrary, the narrator mentions leaves in Book 14 to praise the vigor and energy of both armies at once.

To interpret the simile, we have to look at the surrounding context, and particularly at Diomedes' speech immediately before Glaucus' simile. The son of Tydeus aims at every turn to threaten Glaucus (a view championed by Martin, 1989: 127-129), and he does so by emphasizing limits. First, Diomedes claims not to have seen Glaucus in the front lines before (*οὐ μὲν γάρ ποτ' ὄπωπα*, 124), the implication behind this remark being that Glaucus has overextended himself and stepped out of place, pressing his luck against opponents more

⁴⁷ Other similar similes include *Il.* 11.155-162 and 20.490-494. The quoted simile in fact forms part of a series of comparisons, extending from 14.393-401 that make vivid the clash of the Achaean and Trojan armies.

excellent than he.⁴⁸ Such a reading is supported by *προβέβηκας* (“you have stepped forward,”) in the next line (125). Furthermore, Diomedes contrasts *σῶι θάρσει* “your [sc. empty] daring” (126) with *ἐμῶι μένει* “my [sc. potent] might” (127) in order to disparage Glaucus, to warn him that he is out of his element in the front lines.⁴⁹ The warrior sounds the motif of overstepping again at the close of his speech to cap his threat (143): *ἄσσον ἴθ’, ὥς κεν θάσσον ὀλέθρου πείραθ’ ἵκηαι* “come nearer to reach more swiftly the limits of your destruction.”

Diomedes also sets limits by drawing a line between mortal and divine. Even at the very beginning, Diomedes poses a provocative question to his opponent (*τίς δὲ σὺ ἐσσι, φέριστε, καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων*, “Whosoever are you, sir, of mortal men?” 123), seeking to find out to what realm he belongs. Has he come from the sky (*κατ’ οὐρανοῦ εἰλήλουθας*, 127), as a god would? If so, Diomedes refuses repeatedly to fight him (129 and 141). If not, however, Diomedes threatens to test Glaucus’ status at spear point—by trying to kill him—the epithet *καταθνητῶν* “mortal” ringing ominously at the beginning of Diomedes’ speech. Diomedes further distinguishes gods from mortals by their diet (*οἱ ἀρούρης καρπὸν ἔδουσιν*, “[mortals] who eat the fruit of the field,” 143). That phrase, which forms part of Apollo’s leaf simile in Book 21 (*ἀρούρης καρπὸν ἔδοντες*, 21.465), has in Apollo’s mouth a dismissive, contemptuous air, which also comes into play in Book 6. The phrase ties human mortality to a vegetal diet; the plants mortals eat, like human beings themselves, grow and decay in cycles. Gods, who consume nectar and ambrosia, imperishable food, are not subject to cycles of life and death.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Cf. Pelliccia (2002: 220).

⁴⁹ Graziosi and Haubold (2010: 111 *ad* 126) call *σῶι θάρσει* “an undermining addition” [i.e. it undermines Glaucus’ aggression].

⁵⁰ Nectar and ambrosia have the power to stop a corpse from decaying: *Πατρόκλωι δ’ αὖτ’ ἀμβροσίην καὶ νέκταρ ἐρυθρόν / στάξε κατὰ ῥινῶν, ἵνα οἱ χρῶς ἔμπεδος εἴη* “[Thetis] let drip

On this score, both Apollo and Diomedes use the phrase to point out the superiority of gods to mortals.

Diomedes tries at the outset of his speech to pin Glaucus down with his aggressive and threatening question: “Who are you?” In Glaucus’ response, however, we perceive a change in perspective. The Lycian parries Tydeus’ son and raises the stakes by answering Diomedes’ question “who?” with his own even more provocative “why?” (*Il.* 6.145). When we compare the language of *Il.* 6.145-149 with the language of Diomedes’ first speech (6.123-143), we discover a striking overlap. τὰ μέν τ’ ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει “Some leaves the wind pours to the ground.” (6.147) answers αἰ δ’ ἅμα πᾶσαι / θύσθλα χαμαὶ κατέχευαν, 133-134). Diomedes is telling the story of Lycourgos who harassed the baby Dionysus and his nurses. Here is Diomedes’ story in full (6.130-140):

οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ Δρύαντος υἱός, κρατερὸς Λυκούργος,
δὴν ἦν, ὅς ῥα θεοῖσιν ἐπουρανίοισιν ἔριζεν·
ὅς ποτε μαινομένοιο Διωνύσοιο τιθήνας
σεύε κατ’ ἡγάθειον Νυσηΐον, αἰ δ’ ἅμα πᾶσαι
θύσθλα χαμαὶ κατέχευαν, ὑπ’ ἀνδροφόνιο Λυκούργου
θεινόμεναι βονυπλήγι. Διῶνυσος δὲ φοβηθεὶς
δύσεθ’ ἄλὸς κατὰ κύμα, Θέτις δ’ ὑπεδέξατο κόλπῳ
δειδιότα· κρατερὸς γὰρ ἔχε τρόμος ἀνδρὸς ὁμοκλήι.
τῷ μὲν ἔπειτ’ ὀδύσαντο θεοὶ ῥεῖα ζῶντες,
καὶ μιν τυφλὸν ἔθηκε Κρόνου παῖς· οὐδ’ ἄρ’ ἔτι δὴν
ἦν, ἐπεὶ ἀθανάτοισιν ἀπήχθετο πᾶσι θεοῖσιν.

Not even did the son of Dryas, strong Lycourgos,
live long, who rivaled with the heaven-dwelling gods:
He [Lycourgos] once drove the nurses of raving Dionysus
about very famous Mt. Nysa, and they [the nurses] all together
poured their implements to the earth,
struck by the prod of man-slaying Lycourgos. And Dionysus, in fear,
dove down into the wave of the sea, and Thetis received him to her breast
in his fear; for strong trembling gripped him at the shout of the man.
Then the gods who live easily grew angry with him [Lycourgos],
and the son of Cronus made him blind; and he did not live long,
when he became hateful to all the immortal gods.

the ambrosia and red nectar down over Patroclus’ nostrils in order that his skin remain intact” (*Il.* 19.38-39).

In fact the story of Lycourgus that so dominates Diomedes' speech offers a few surprises. Martin (1989: 127-128) and Harries (1993: 137) plausibly link Lycourgus to Diomedes and Dionysus to Glaucus; Diomedes boasts that he will hurt Glaucus just as Lycourgus hurt the infant Dionysus and his nurses. Graziosi and Haubold pointedly sum it up: "Dionysos is depicted as utterly helpless" (2010: 115 *ad* 137). The focus in the passage lies with Dionysus' fear (*φοβηθείς*, 135; *δειδιότα* and *κρατερὸς τρόμος*, 137). Indeed the oxymoronic pairing of *κρατερὸς* with *τρόμος* supports the paradoxical notion that Dionysus feels overpowering fear. Moreover, Diomedes contrasts the troubled Dionysus with the other gods who live peacefully (*θεοὶ ῥέῃα ζῶοντες*, 138). It is surprising, because Diomedes has promised not to fight with Glaucus if Glaucus is immortal, that Diomedes tells a story about such a puny divinity being hurt. We would expect Lycourgus to rival a more powerful immortal.⁵¹ And why would Diomedes link himself to an impious figure who suffered blindness for his actions in the end? Although Athena warned Diomedes not to fight with the gods, he wounds Aphrodite in Book 5 and is duly rebuked by Apollo. When Diomedes refuses to fight Glaucus if he is divine, we gather he has learned his lesson, but in the course of speaking Diomedes adopts the posture of Lycourgus who frightened Dionysus just as Diomedes has ruffled Aphrodite. Scodel (1992: 81) believes on the one hand that Diomedes projects confidence with the Lycourgus story because Diomedes feels sure, in light of his divinely aided success in Book 5, that the gods take his side. On the other hand, Scodel points out, the other characters, especially Glaucus, do not share Diomedes' view. Indeed, Glaucus means with his speech to undermine Diomedes' confidence. Through his simile, and not only through the story of Bellerophon, Glaucus achieves just this.

⁵¹ Cf. Graziosi and Haubold (2010: 112 *ad* 130-140): "In this episode he [Dionysus] is mentioned precisely as a limit-case: even the least martial of gods should not be attacked. As a side effect, Diomedes' choice of god ensures that he pays no compliment to Glaucus."

The overlap of diction indicates specifically how Glaucus seizes the upper hand from Diomedes in this boasting contest:

αἶ δ' ἅμα πᾶσαι
θύσθλα χαμαὶ κατέχευαν, (6.133-134)

τὰ μὲν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει (6.147)

In Diomedes' speech Dionysus' nurses pour their ritual instruments to the earth in fear because Lycourgos has terrified them. The fall of the nurses' *θύσθλα* foreshadows their own ruin and death. That Lycourgos has murder on his mind comes across in the phrase *ὑπ' ἀνδροφόνου* *Λυκούργου* "by man-slaying Lycourgos" (134).⁵² *χαμαὶ κατέχευαν* thus marks the pinnacle of Lycourgos' success. Since Lycourgos stands in for Diomedes, the phrase presents the son of Tydeus in a threatening light.

Glaucus defuses the threat against himself and lobs back a threat of his own against Diomedes by taking up and subtly modifying Diomedes' language. While Diomedes makes Lycourgos the agent of his story in an effort to cast Lycourgos (and therefore himself) as the conquering hero, Glaucus depersonalizes the cycle of life and death. For Glaucus, the wind, not any hero, causes death.⁵³ By reconfiguring Diomedes' speech this way, Glaucus takes credit for success in battle away from Diomedes.

The broadening of perspective compels us to ask as well whom the leaves in Glaucus' simile specifically represent. Because Glaucus connects leaves to humanity in general, it

⁵² The threatening tone of this phrase is mimicked in *Iliad* 1, for example, when Achilles promises in his oath on the scepter that Hector will bring ruin to the Achaeans: *εὔτ' ἄν πολλοὶ ὕφ' Ἑκτορος ἀνδροφόνου / θνήσκοντες πίπτωσι* "when many [Achaeans] fall dead at the hands of man-murdering Hector" (1.233-234). On the other hand, the choice of epithet also marks the division between gods and mortals, a central theme of the speech. Ironically it also announces Lycourgos' ignorance of this division (Graziosi and Haubold, 2010: 114 *ad* 134), for which Zeus will later punish him (139).

⁵³ Grethlein (2006a: 86) argues that the wind represents the impersonal force of chance.

becomes possible for the audience to read the simile two ways, depending on whether we believe the leaves represent Diomedes or Glaucus himself. If Glaucus means for the leaves to stand for himself, he deflates the aggressive rhetoric which Diomedes hurls at him. Certainly with this simile Glaucus admits to Diomedes that he is mortal and, what is more, vulnerable to attack. The posture is self-deprecating, as if Glaucus were playing dead. Still, since Glaucus conceives of human generations as leaves and the death of humans as the falling of leaves, he is, in effect, also denying that Diomedes would gain much glory for killing him. As we have seen, leaves are fragile in Homer since it is much easier to destroy a leaf than a tree. Further, even if Diomedes manages to huff and puff, as it were, and blow Glaucus down, the tree would remain standing and able to produce new leaves in due course. Diomedes' victory would be temporary, not long lasting or truly meaningful.

If Glaucus means for the leaves to stand for Diomedes, he reverses the threatening rhetoric, and turns it against his opponent. Put simply, if Diomedes stands for the leaves, then Glaucus is reminding Diomedes that he, Diomedes, is mortal in order to destroy his confidence. As a mortal, Diomedes is powerless against the wind which will send him floating to the earth when he is fated to die (implied in the simile as the end of the growing season). Furthermore, on this reading, when Diomedes dies, he will fall ignominiously into oblivion. Just as there are no useful lasting products of culture that can be fashioned from leaves, so too, will Diomedes' name and exploits go unremembered and unappreciated. Glaucus tries through this imagery to deny Diomedes a *κλέος ἄφθιτον*.

CONCLUSION

Whichever interpretation we favor, and I believe both are suggested in the way that Glaucus contrives the simile, Glaucus uses the simile, and the particularly negative and unheroic

associations of leaves, against Diomedes in order to answer the threat posed by Diomedes' question and the story of Lycourgus.

Leaf similes engender resonances opposite to the associations evoked by similes that liken men to trees. While the falling of leaves and the felling of trees both represent death in Homer, the leaves suggest a bleaker outlook on human life. Hardy trees represent the toughness, endurance, and courage of heroes, and when a tree is felled by a woodsman, it does not go to waste. But leaves, so much more fragile and insignificant than the trees to which they are temporarily attached, offer little of value to any hero to whom they are compared. We have shown, then, by our analysis of the resonances of leaves in Homer that leaves do different symbolic work for Homer than trees do. While the imagery of nature regularly reflects on the human condition, particular images can convey quite different conceptions of heroic life and death.

Chapter 4: Nausicaa and the Delian Palm: Odysseus' Strategic Epithalamium

In the two previous chapters of this project we have looked closely at the *Iliad*, at how Homer's characters and narrator have used tree/human likenesses to illustrate those aspects of the human condition that fascinate the poet of that poem, namely the death of heroes and the commemoration of martial achievement. Accordingly, in our second chapter we showed how the poet uses the imagery of falling trees in the battle narrative to praise Achaean martial success and how Achilles draws upon that pattern to criticize Agamemnon. Then in our third chapter we examined the poetic resonances of falling leaves in Homer and contrasted them with our conclusions about the symbolism of trees from Chapter 2. We concluded that the poet uses leaf/human likenesses to illustrate a bleaker, less glorious conception of the war experience wherein strengthless, numberless, and nameless heroes fall into oblivion upon their deaths, themes upon which Glaucus draws to create an effective boast against a confident Diomedes. In these next two chapters, then, we will examine how the tree can represent matrimony and demonstrate the considerable expressive flexibility of tree imagery in Homer.

Accordingly, here we pivot from the *Iliad* to the *Odyssey*, passing from the connection between trees and death to the link between trees and marriage. Specifically we will demonstrate how the palm image of Odysseus' first speech to Nausicaa plays the vital role in communicating three messages to the princess simultaneously. First, it evokes epithalamic motifs (*Od.* 6.163) designed to charm Nausicaa so that she will help Odysseus secure passage to Ithaca. At the same time, these epithalamic motifs subtly indicate to Nausicaa that Odysseus seeks to avoid a romance with her which would jeopardize his homecoming. The palm imagery also marks Odysseus as pious to defend against a potential threat Odysseus perceives from Artemis. Finally, when Odysseus calls Nausicaa a "shoot" and a "sapling," he addresses her as a devoted parent

would address his children to further disqualify himself as a romantic interest. The narrator's adjectives *μειλίχιον καὶ κερδαλέον* are perfectly apposite. In various ways Odysseus subtly crafts the sweet image of the palm with one goal in mind: Ithaca.

To convey how wide the thematic range of tree imagery can be, I want to underscore how narrow the *Iliad*'s use of tree imagery actually is. To do so I wish to revisit briefly our discussion of Agamemnon's scepter and remind the reader of a road not taken by Achilles or by the Homeric narrator, but by Hesiod. In our analysis of Achilles' excursus, we argued that the hero describes the scepter as a wooden object, and not as a metallic object (a departure from the narrator's standard practice), because he wants to "kill" the living tree in front of his audience to show ultimately that Agamemnon is leading the Achaeans on a road to their ruination. Here, as elsewhere in the *Iliad*, imagery of living trees is pressed into the service of making death vivid.

In contrast to Homer, Hesiod imbues the scepter he receives from the Muses in the *Theogony* with a supernatural vigor and celebrates its everlasting life and power (*Th.* 30-33):

καί μοι κηπτρον ἔδον, δάφνης ἐριθιλέος ὄξυν
δρέψασαι θηητόν· ἐνέπνευσαν δέ μοι αὐδὴν
θέσπιν, ἵνα κλείοιμι τὰ τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα,
καί με κέλουθ' ὑμνεῖν μακάρων γένος αἰὲν ὄντων

And [the Muses] gave to me a scepter, having plucked a wondrous shoot of flourishing laurel; and they breathed into me a marvelous voice, in order that I celebrate what will come to pass and what has already happened, and they bid me to praise the race of the blessed ones who live forever.

Here Hesiod offers a third creation-story for the scepter distinct from the stories Homer tells in the *Iliad*.¹ Neither forged by Hephaestus (*Il.* 2.100-109) nor crafted by man (*Il.* 1.234-239), the

¹ Arthur (1983) and Clay (2003: 73) have argued for a relationship between Hesiod's scepter and Achilles' scepter. Arthur (1983) equates Hesiod's plucking of the scepter with the cutting of Achilles' scepter in *Iliad* 1 in an attempt to prove that both scepters rest ambiguously between nature and culture. Yet the emphases of the two passages could not be more different. More generally, Østerud (1976: 28) argues that Hesiod draws on the scepter's associations to political authority to polemically proclaim that the *Theogony* is more truthful than the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

scepter in Hesiod is a divine gift, plucked, not chopped. Unlike Achilles, who details the violent cutting of the scepter (τομήν, *Il.* 1.235) and repeatedly denies that the branch can grow (οὐ ποτε φύσει, 234-235; οὐδ' ἀναθηλήσει, 236), Hesiod does not dwell on such barren themes. Instead he marvels at the scepter's vitality, calling the branch "wondrous" (θηητόν) and the laurel "flourishing" (ἐριθηλέος). Unlike Agamemnon's scepter or the poplar-wood chariot rims that appear in the obituary for the Trojan Simoesius (*Il.* 4.485-486), Hesiod's scepter, thanks to the gods, *retains* its natural vigor for as long as Hesiod has power to sing.² Indeed, were Homer's sensibilities different, we could even imagine a scene in the *Iliad* wherein a supporter of Agamemnon's regime crafts praise for Agamemnon and his rule by conceiving of Agamemnon's scepter as a living tree along such Hesiodic lines: that, thanks to Zeus, Agamemnon's power is everlasting and unimpeachable just as the scepter retains its green vigor.³ But this is not a story that the *Iliad* is interested in because the *Iliad* undertakes to *question* the premises of heroism and the prerogatives of kingship. It is thoroughly preoccupied with whether risking life and limb is ultimately worth the material rewards a hero may or may not receive for their struggle on the battlefield, and with whether κλέος ἄφθιτον is a satisfactory consolation for physical death. Trees are evocative symbols of this human quandary.

² The present aspect of κλείοιμι (32) does not set any temporal limits for Hesiod's song. Hesiod goes on to sketch the boundlessness of time with τά τ' ἐκκόμεινα πρό τ' ἐόντα, and continues in a similar vein by calling the gods "those who exist forever" (αἰὲν ἐόντων, 33).

³ Cf. Soph. *Electra* 417-423 where Chrysothemis relates how Clytemnestra dreamed that Agamemnon replanted his scepter in his familial hearth and that it sent forth a leafy shoot that shaded the land. This miraculous regrowing serves as confirmation from the natural world of Agamemnon's legitimate royal authority. As Easterling notes (1989: 116), this prophetic dream brings to pass what Achilles said in his oath was impossible: "Never again will [the scepter] bloom again" (*Il.* 1.236). Cf. Finglass (2007: 215-218, esp. *ad* 420-1 and 421-2, on parallels for the connections among scepters, growth, and authority in folklore, in the Bible, and in later literature.

We have shown, then, by looking more closely at the *Theogony* just now, the potential range of themes to which tree imagery can be put, and the restrictions Homer imposes on this imagery in the *Iliad* to make it conform to his poetic purposes. In this chapter, then, to better appreciate the life-centered aspects of tree/human likenesses, we must turn away from the *Iliad* toward the *Odyssey*.

The union of vigorous resonances with tree imagery emerges particularly in Odysseus' complimentary portrait of Nausicaa, which I quote in full because the image of the palm is closely integrated with the image of Nausicaa's family at the beginning and with Odysseus' plea at the end:

γονοῦμαί σε, ἀνασσα· θεός νῦν τις ἢ βροτὸς ἐσσι·
 εἰ μὲν τις θεός ἐσσι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν, 150
 Ἀρτέμιδι σε ἐγὼ γε, Διὸς κούρη μεγάληο,
 εἰδὸς τε μέγεθός τε φυὴν τ' ἄγχιστα εἴσκω·
 εἰ δέ τίς ἐσσι βροτῶν, τοὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ ναιετάουσι,
 155
 τρισμάκαρες μὲν σοί γε πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ,
 τρισμάκαρες δὲ κασίγνητοι· μάλα πού σφισι θυμὸς
 αἰὲν εὐφροσύνησιν ἰαίνεται εἵνεκα σείο,
 λευσσόντων τοιόνδε θάλος χορὸν εἰσοιχνεύσαν.
 κείνος δ' αὖ περὶ κῆρι μακάρτατος ἔξοχον ἄλλων,
 160
 ὅς κέ σ' ἐέδνοισι βρίσας οἰκόνδ' ἀγάγηται.
 οὐ γάρ πω τοιοῦτον ἐγὼ ἶδον ὀφθαλμοῖσιν,
 οὔτ' ἀνδρ' οὔτε γυναῖκα· σέβας μ' ἔχει εἰσορόωντα.
 Δῆλφ' ἤδη ποτε τοῖον Ἀπόλλωνος παρὰ βωμῷ
 φοῖνικος νέον ἔρνος ἀνερχόμενον ἐνόησα·
 165
 ἦλθον γάρ καὶ κείσε, πολὺν δέ μοι ἔσπετο λαὸς
 τὴν ὁδὸν ἧ δὴ μέλλεν ἐμοὶ κακὰ κήδε' ἔσεσθαι.
 ὥς δ' αὐτῶς καὶ κείνο ἰδὼν ἐτεθήπεα θυμῷ
 δῆν, ἐπεὶ οὐ πω τοῖον ἀνήλυθεν ἐκ δόρυ γαίης,
 170
 ὥς, σέ, γύναι, ἄγαμαί τε τέθηπά τε δειδίδια τ' αἰνῶς
 γούνων ἀψασθαι· χαλεπὸν δέ με πένθος ἰκάνει.
 χιτῆρ' ἐξικοστῶ φύγον ἤματι οἶνοπα πόντον·
 τόφρα δέ μ' αἰεὶ κύμ' ἐφόρει κραιπναί τε θύελλαι
 νήσου ἀπ' Ὠγυγίης· νῦν δ' ἐνθάδε κάββαλε δαίμων,
 175
 ὄφρα τί που καὶ τῇδε πάθω κακόν· οὐ γάρ οἶω
 παύσεσθ', ἀλλ' ἔτι πολλὰ θεοὶ τελέουσι πάροιθεν.
 ἀλλά, ἄνασσ', ἐλέαιρε· σέ γάρ κακὰ πολλὰ μογήσας
 ἐς πρώτην ἰκόμην, τῶν δ' ἄλλων οὐ τινα οἶδα
 ἀνθρώπων, οἳ τῇνδε πόλιν καὶ γαίαν ἔχουσιν.
 ἄστυ δέ μοι δείξον, δὸς δὲ ῥάκος ἀμφιβαλέσθαι,
 180
 εἰ τί που εἰλυμα σπείρων ἔχες ἐνθάδ' ἰούσα.
 σοὶ δὲ θεοὶ τόσα δοῖεν ὅσα φρεσὶ σῇσι μενοιναῖς,
 ἄνδρα τε καὶ οἶκον καὶ ὁμοφροσύνην ὀπάσειαν
 ἐσθλήν· οὐ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ γε κρεῖσσον καὶ ἄρειον,
 ἢ ὅθ' ὁμοφρονέοντε νοήμασιν οἶκον ἔχητον

ἀνὴρ ἦδ' ἔ γυνή· πόλλ' ἄλγεα δυσμενέεσσι,
 χάρματα δ' εὐμενέτησι· μάλιστα δέ τ' ἔκλυον αὐτοί. 185

I supplicate you, regal one: are you a god or a mortal?
 If you are a god, [those] who hold the broad sky,
 I liken you to Artemis, daughter of great Zeus
 most closely for your appearance, your height and your stature;
 but if you are one of the mortals, who dwell upon the earth,
 three times blessed are your father and revered mother,
 and three times blessed are your brothers; I suppose their heart
 is always glad with good cheer because of you,
 as they look upon such a shoot as you entering the dancing-space.
 Whoever should lead you home weighted with a bride-price
 is in turn the most blessed of all men as to his lot.
 For I have never seen such a thing as you with my eyes,
 neither man nor woman; and reverence holds me as I look.
 Once on Delos near the altar of Apollo
 I perceived such a shoot, a young palm shooting up;
 for I came there too, and a great host followed me
 on a way on which I was destined to have many cares.
 Thus, when I looked upon it I was dumbstruck in my spirit
 for a long time, since no tree such as that had ever grown out of the earth,
 just as, lady, I marvel at you and am dumb and I fear terribly to
 grasp your knees; and difficult sorrow comes over me.
 Yesterday I escaped, on the twentieth day, the wine-dark sea;
 for that long the wave[s] and the swift gales carried me
 from the island of Ogygia; and now Providence has thrown me down here,
 where I suppose I shall suffer some evil even here; for I do not suppose
 that I will stop, but still in the future the gods will bring to pass many things.
 But, regal one, take pity; for I, after having endured many evils,
 reached you first, and I do not know any of the other men
 who hold this city and country.
 But show me the town, and give me a rag to throw around myself,
 if, having come here, you have some covering for your laundry.
 And may the gods give to you everything you desire in your heart,
 may they grant you a husband and a household and a noble
 unity of mind; for there is nothing greater or better than this,
 when two people have their household, united in their thoughts,
 a husband and a wife; a source of many pains to those that think ill of them,
 but a source of joy to well wishers; and they have a good reputation.

In this speech Odysseus deploys the imagery of shoots and saplings, tapping into their close associations with strength and life, to impress the princess and secure a passage to Ithaca. We will present in this chapter a reading of this speech in which we will explicate the rhetorical

effect of the palm image in context and explain why Odysseus refers to Nausicaa as a *θάλος* “shoot” (157) and an *ἔρνος* “sapling” (163) by comparing and contrasting it with passages containing similar imagery, just as we analyzed Achilles’ rhetoric in Chapter 2 in light of the tree imagery of the Iliadic battle narrative and Glaucus’ in Chapter 3 by comparing his leaf simile to other passages in the Homeric corpus in which leaves figured. We will show, ultimately, that Odysseus deploys the image of the palm in order to praise Nausicaa’s nubile beauty, to extricate himself from potential romantic entanglements, and to avoid divine enmities that jeopardize his *νόστος*.

Comparison of the palm imagery in Odysseus’ speech here with similar imagery in the narrative proves to be more complex than it was in our previous chapters because the differences between the palm image here and, say, Iliadic similes, are more striking than the similarities.⁴ Most importantly, Odysseus’ speech presents us with the only reference to the date palm in Homer, so in a sense this comparison is *sui generis*. We also encounter a gender reversal: in the *Odyssey*, the hero compares the marriageable Nausicaa, a girl with her life ahead of her, to a palm, but in the *Iliad*, the poet compares male warriors about to die to falling trees. Furthermore, the notion of paying reverence to a tree is foreign to the *Iliad*; for the most part, trees in that poem are attacked and cut down, yet in this scene the date palm remains standing. All these differences speak to the very different worlds of the two epics—in a poem about battle there is

⁴ Fränkel (1977 [1921]: 39), Harder (1988), and de Jong (2001: 161 *ad* 6.163-7) compare the present passage with the passages in which the word *ἔρνος* appears. Kakridis (1971: 147-148), however, separates the Odyssean palm image from the *Iliad* passages on the grounds that Odysseus does not make an objective comparison between palm and maiden as the narrator presents a simile but rather shares a personal reminiscence to establish a more personal bond with Nausicaa.

little room for a story about a marriageable girl, just as in the peaceful utopia of Scheria we do not encounter the imagery of death or, for that matter, felled trees.⁵

We are analyzing in this project how the poet in one case will bring a character's use of imagery into alignment or set it at odds with the main narrator in another. Yet in the case of epithalamic motifs we cannot compare Odysseus' speech with the Homeric narrator's standard practice because epithalamic poetry has left only faint traces in Homer. Yet, as we shall argue below, we have latitude to look more widely outside epic because our poet is a master of many genres (especially of the lyric mode) and can bring epithalamic motifs and imagery into Odysseus' speech although there are no epithalmia proper in the Homeric corpus.⁶

Before we survey this epithalamic background, we need to establish exactly what Odysseus seeks to achieve here and lay out what obstacles stand in his way. The narrator takes great pains to show the audience every stage of Odysseus' thinking in the moments before his supplication. Suspense builds because the encounter with Nausicaa presents a stern test of Odysseus' social tact. Let us then examine carefully the steps of Odysseus' thought process as that encounter takes place.

Odysseus is first awoken by the shriek of Nausicaa's handmaidens (*Od.* 6.117). Not knowing where he is or who has made the sound, he fears the worst, and, in a soliloquy, asks

⁵ Indeed, Alcinous' ever-flourishing and seasonless garden (*Od.* 7.114-126) offers an image diametrically opposed to the Iliadic motif of garden plants under threat, of which Euphorbus as an olive shoot and Achilles as sapling are the most prominent examples (Euphorbus: 17.51-60; Achilles: 18.54-59 and 437-440).

⁶ Martin (1997) has argued that the Homeric similes are composed of lyric motifs. More specifically Danek (2006: 66-67) also argues that the myth of Tithonus, also treated in Sappho fr. 58 V, explains the details of the simile of the Trojan elders to cicadas at *Il.* 3.150-153. Lattimore (1969) and Rissman (1983) find echoes of a martial context in the diction and imagery of the Nausicaa scene. Lattimore argues that the poet of the *Odyssey* contrasts war with washing to give the scene in *Odyssey* 6 an "elusive charm" (91). For Rissman, the parallels are evidence for a thematic link between the topics of love and war.

himself whether the people on this new and unfamiliar island will be hostile or hospitable towards him (6.120-121).⁷ The thought crosses his mind that the girls playing might in fact be nymphs (6.122-124); if they were, Odysseus would be in mortal danger (especially if he behaves even a little insolently).⁸ Bravely resolving to investigate the situation for himself (ἀλλ' ἄγ', ἐγὼν αὐτὸς πειρήσομαι ἥδ' ἴδωμαι, 126—note the emphatic first person pronouns), Odysseus takes the precaution of covering his genitals with a tree branch so that the girls or nymphs will not feel threatened (127-129).⁹ Even so, the girls, frightened by Odysseus' bedraggled appearance, scatter, while the princess stands before him, her fear checked by Athena (139-

⁷ Odysseus said these lines before, when he reached the Cyclopes' island (9.175-176), as the audience learns when he tells about his adventures to the Phaeacians, and will say them again when he reaches Ithaca (13.201-202). Given the disaster that befell him and his companions in Polyphemus' cave, Odysseus' words here indicate the hero's distress and sense of foreboding. Homer further reveals Odysseus' anxiety and cautiousness by putting the negative alternative—that the Phaeacians will be violent—before the positive alternative.

⁸ In the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, the goddess does not appear to Anchises in immortal guise so that he will not be afraid of her (μή μιν ταρβήσκειν, 83). Richardson (2010: 234 *ad* 91-106 cites Odysseus' speech to Nausicaa as a parallel to Anchises'. After Anchises recognizes Aphrodite as a goddess he is struck with fear that she will do him harm—probably by making him impotent (188-190).

⁹ This gesture illustrates Odysseus' characteristic restraint and cleverness: he often demonstrates his quick thinking by making tools out of the plants in his immediate environment and knowing how to use them to his own advantage. For example in the *Iliad* during the Doloneia Odysseus hides Dolon's armor in a tamarisk bush and fashions a landmark out of the bush so that he and Diomedes will not get lost on their way back to the Greek ships (10.465-468). Odysseus demonstrates similarly quick thinking when he uses the scepter as a club against Thersites in order to avert a mutiny (2.265-266). In the *Odyssey*, Homer demonstrates his skill at carpentry when he fashions his raft (5.237-261), the stake that blinds Polyphemus (9.375-397), and his bedpost (23.188-201). Even when his raft breaks in the storm off of Phaeacia, Odysseus perseveres, clinging to a plank for life (5.370-371); once he makes landfall, Odysseus, after surveying his options, decides to find a place in the woods to sleep (5.470-475) and improvises a bed out of a pile of soft leaves (5.486-487). It is no wonder that Odysseus is the mastermind (if not the actual builder) of the Trojan Horse (8.492-495), which Odysseus specifically calls wooden (δουρατέου, 493).

141).¹⁰ Immediately Odysseus weighs his options. Should he adopt the posture of a suppliant and grasp her knees? No, his second thought proves to be the better course; he will address her with a gentle speech directed toward his own interest (*μειλίχιον καὶ κερδαλέον φάτο μῦθον*, 148).¹¹

The contrast of sweetness and calculation forms the complex rhetorical texture of the speech.¹² Odysseus' masterful manipulation of the sapling imagery in this speech exemplifies

¹⁰ The narrator compares Odysseus approaching the girls to a hungry mountain lion approaching flocks for food (6.130-136). The tone of the simile and its relationship to its context in the *Odyssey* varies between the humorous (Lattimore, 1969; Finley, 1978: 80; Pucci, 1987; Glenn, 1998-99) and the violent (Magrath, 1982; Karakantza, 2003; Rosenmeyer, 2004). There are probably hints of humor in this weatherworn, schlubby lion, and in *μίξεσθαι* (136), taken by Garvie (1995: 117 *ad* 6.136) and Glenn (1998-99) as a sly double entendre. The narrator uses the simile to heighten the erotic charge of the scene and the threat of Odysseus' potential violence against the girls, just as, as we shall see below, the narrator uses the Artemis simile at 6.102-109 to suggest the threat of Nausicaa and the girls against Odysseus. It is especially interesting, given how the narrator goes out of his way to build suspense, how Odysseus uses the image of the palm sapling to defuse these threats simultaneously.

¹¹ Such thoughtfulness may be the characteristic feature of Odysseus' brand of heroism. Most notably, Odysseus shows remarkable restraint when, trapped in the Cyclops' cave, having watched Polyphemus brain and devour his companions, he nevertheless chooses not to rush forward to slay the monster (9.301-304). Cf. Redfield (1983: 228): "Odysseus does a kind of cost-benefit analysis of everything, weighing present expenditure against hoped-for utilities... Much of his well-known craft is a matter of taking thought for the necessary means and the claims of material life."

¹² Stanford (1959: 313 *ad* 6.149ff), for example, in his commentary exhorts students to "observe the masterly tact of this speech." Finley (1978: 80) calls it "supremely graceful" in "graceless circumstances"; van Nortwick (1979: 272), "a virtuoso performance." Clarke (1967: 52-53) compliments Odysseus, declaring that he "responds magnificently with perhaps the most mannered speech (especially 149-69) in all of Greek literature. It is contrived, ingratiating, sincere, totally appropriate, supremely effective." Lattimore (1969: 89) is just as admiring, but perhaps warier than Clarke, calling it "a beautiful speech of flattery." The word "flattery" implies that the praise Odysseus gives Nausicaa is self-serving. Gross (1976), after calling Odysseus' words "a speech of studied ambiguity" (312) spells out explicitly what Odysseus stands to gain from Nausicaa: "Odysseus' purpose is ostensibly to gain Nausicaa's goodwill and to quiet her anxieties, but in view of the flattery and strategically placed references to marriage, there is little wonder that Nausicaa, informed by Athene of immanent nuptials (6.27), should assume Odysseus the right man" (313).

this contrast neatly. The palm and sapling likenesses evoke a marriage-song, but, as we will show in the first section of this chapter, Odysseus, by manipulating the sapling and palm imagery, fashions an oxymoronic epithalamic speech that discourages a potential union between himself and Nausicaa. In the second section, we shall show how Odysseus' story of standing agape before the Delian palm is addressed both to Nausicaa and to Artemis (on the chance that Nausicaa is in fact the goddess, as Odysseus suspects). The anecdote is designed to show Nausicaa that she has no reason to fear a sexual assault and to convince Artemis to forgive his trespass. In the third section, we shall compare Odysseus' use of sapling imagery in *Odyssey* 6 with the other sapling/human likenesses in the Homeric corpus to establish how Odysseus presents himself as a parental figure to the princess, not as her future husband. Odysseus, then, walks a fine line with his speech: he praises Nausicaa fulsomely enough to win her sympathies but also subtly communicates to her at the same time—without offending her—that he is not, after all, interested in her, and that his ultimate goal is his homecoming.

THE EPITHALAMIC BACKGROUND

1) THE FOLK STORY

The potential marriage of Odysseus and Nausicaa forms the background of the plot of the entirety of the Phaeacian episode. As Woodhouse (1930: 54-66) argued long ago, and other scholars have refined,¹³ Homer creates the Phaeacian episode by modifying a folk-story where an unknown stranger meets and falls in love with a princess, marries her, and takes her with him to his native land. An underlying folktale explains certain poorly motivated details in the Phaeacian story like Euryalus' hostility to Odysseus during the games in Book 8 and the fact that Odysseus competes in the games at all after Alcinous has told him that he will only be a

¹³ Among them are Vallillee (1955), Lattimore (1969), Gross (1976), Krischer (1985; 1989), and Crane (1987).

spectator. Indeed, the theme of marriage pervades even the scene at the river, starting from Athena's visit to Nausicaa's bedchamber to encourage Nausicaa in her dream to wash clothes, reminding her that marriage is not far off. In his own speech, Odysseus claims Nausicaa's husband would be a fortunate man and, at the end of his speech, extols the virtues of marriage itself while Nausicaa announces to her friends that she would like to have a husband like the stranger she has just met (6.244-245).¹⁴ Further, when she instructs Odysseus not to accompany her through town, she claims that gossips would spread nasty rumors about her if they saw the princess with a handsome stranger (6.276-284).¹⁵

2) EPITHALAMIC IMAGERY

*τίω σ', ὦ φίλε γάμβρε, κάλως ἐικάσδω;
ὄρπακι βραδίνω σε μάλιστ' ἐικάσδω. (Sappho 115 V)*

To what do I liken you appropriately, dear groom?
I liken you very much to a slender sapling.

*οἶον τὸ γλυκύμαλον ἐρεύθεται ἄκρῳ ἐπ' ὕσδῳ,
ἄκρον ἐπ' ἀκροτάτῳ, λελάθοντο δὲ μαλοδρόπῃες·
οὐ μὰν ἐκλελάθοντ', ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐδύναντ' ἐπείκεσθαι. (Sappho 105a V)*

As the sweet apple blushes upon a high branch,
high upon the highest branch, and the apple pickers have forgotten it:
No, they have not completely forgotten it, but they were unable to reach it.

Given that marriage is the central theme in the Phaeacian episode, I assert that the primary reason why Odysseus compares Nausicaa to a sapling and to the palm tree is to evoke in

¹⁴ Stanford (1963 [1954]: 53) does not take what Nausicaa says at face value. What she says is “entirely in keeping with her naïve and frank nature, and it is addressed only to her intimate friends. There is obviously no deep personal emotion involved. Every day in the cinemas of our time adolescents say or think something like this about the handsomer actors and actresses of the screen.” Gross (1976) is right to criticize Stanford's “naïve,” since Nausicaa definitely shows poise throughout the scene. Still, Nausicaa's words are a far cry from suggesting impending nuptials.

¹⁵ Some critics (Gross: 1976; de Jong: 2001: 166 *ad* 6.275-85) have interpreted this speech as expressing more Nausicaa's own desires (i.e. that she and Odysseus be together) than any actual reality.

her mind and in the audience's mind an epithalamic song. Odysseus adopts the imagery of marriage songs in order to compliment Nausicaa's gracefulness so that she will be inclined to invite Odysseus to her parents' palace.

Still, he makes the comparison in no cavalier way, but rather with his characteristic restraint and his consummate cleverness. Alert to the subtle danger posed by the Phaeacians, Odysseus understands that praising Nausicaa's beauty carries at least two risks.¹⁶ On the one hand, if Odysseus praises Nausicaa too fulsomely, he would thereby encourage a marriage between him and the princess, a turn of events which would threaten his νόστος. On the other hand, if Odysseus chose his words with too little tact, and appeared threatening to Nausicaa,¹⁷ she would be repulsed and refuse to help him (or if she is a goddess, as Odysseus suspects, Odysseus could well be violently punished). The threat of sexual violence to Nausicaa in this scene is quite real: we need only think of the opening of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* where Hades abducts Persephone from her friends as she picks flowers with her girl friends.¹⁸ Facing these constraints, therefore, Odysseus deliberately chooses the palm and sapling imagery to evoke epithalamic songs but he adapts his imagery in order to tone down the more obvious

¹⁶ On the threats to Odysseus posed by the Phaeacians, cf. Rose (1969), Redfield (1983), and Most (1989). de Vries' (1977) attempted refutation of Rose's thesis is unconvincing, not least because de Vries does not construct an argument in positive terms that describes who the Phaeacians really are or how they actually behave.

¹⁷ There is a fine line between marriage and forcible abduction, especially in artistic representations. Cf. Jenkins (1983: 140) and especially Sourvinou-Inwood (1991: 127, n. 133) who notes in passing the coincidence of imagery between Attic vases depicting the "altar + palm tree" motif (102), which she connects closely with the goddess Artemis and with marriage or erotic pursuit, and this scene at the beach, which features Artemis and a palm tree in close proximity to each other. In his note on 6.162-3, Garvie (1995: 123), too, sees merit in her connection.

¹⁸ Ahl and Roisman (1996: 53) discuss how Odysseus' speech diffuses the sexual tension between him and Nausicaa. Recent scholarship on the scene at the river has emphasized the latent threat of sexual violence against Nausicaa, especially Shapiro (1995), Karakantza (2003), and Rosenmeyer (2004).

sexual symbolism of such songs (and to suppress the more violent undertones of these songs as well) so that Nausicaa does not construe Odysseus' speech as too forward or threatening.

Marriage songs as a genre are known to Homer. On Achilles' shield, for example, a marriage is celebrated in the city at peace: the *hymenaeus* (either a ritual cry or the marriage song itself) is raised, there is dancing, music, and a parade with torches that draws the interest of the wider community (*Il.* 18.491-496). In the *Odyssey*, an *ἀοιδός* presides over the double marriage Menelaus is celebrating with dancing and feasting when Telemachus arrives at Sparta (4.3-4, 15-19). We can conclude, then, that Homer knew wedding songs, even though no verses of epithalamia appear in our *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. For the purposes of our argument here, the paucity of actual epithalamic poetry is not so problematic because we can still compare the traditional motifs and imagery of wedding songs with Odysseus' use of imagery in his speech. Based on surviving epithalamic songs, such as Sappho's fragments, descriptions of *epithalamia* in Greek orators, and the Greek-inspired marriage poems of Catullus (poems 61 and 62 in particular), there is general agreement about the purpose and typical imagery of wedding songs.¹⁹ The prevalence of plant/human likenesses in epithalamia, for example, is noted especially by Wheeler (1930: 212-213), Hague (1983: 135-137), and Seaford (1987: 111-112), yet it is important to add, building on their observations, that different types of plant imagery tend to be used for one gender or the other, and the unequal relationship of one plant to another in the similes of epithalamia mirror the androcentric dynamics of real world ancient Greek marriages. The imagery of Odysseus' speech is carefully pitched to play up Nausicaa's independence and

¹⁹ On the content and function of epithalamia, see Wheeler (1930), Hague (1983), Seaford (1987), and Contiades-Tsitsoni (1990). Russell (1979) provides a convenient summary of the contents of the orators [Dionysius] and Menander Rhetor.

downplay the violence and angst that feature prominently in portraits of the bride in many wedding songs.

Hague (1983) and Rissman (1983) have detected the influence of epithalamic motifs in the scene at the beach, and others have observed similar epithalamic influence in literature of various genres and in art. Oakley and Sinos (1993: 12-13), for example, show how the Talos Painter on a fragmentary Attic red-figure krater depicts Theseus' abduction of Helen with nuptial motifs and thereby puts a unique spin on a story of traditionally understood as an abduction. Further, Jenkins (1983) cites Taplin's argument that the entrance of Agamemnon and Cassandra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* is staged as if Cassandra were a bride being led in procession to her new husband's house, contributing irony and tension to the drama. Dodson-Robinson (2010) argues that marriage motifs (especially abduction) pervade Sappho 16 V, a song not generally taken to be a wedding song. Such findings are no great surprise since marriage was such an important element of ancient Greek social life.²⁰

Marriage songs celebrate the union of bride and groom, commend them for their excellent fortune (the *μακαρισμός*), offer wishes for the continued prosperity of the couple, compliment the pair for their beauty by comparing them to gods or lovely plants, whether saplings or flowers,²¹ and anticipate eagerly the consummation of the marriage and the

²⁰ Oakley and Sinos (1993) reconstruct the 5th century Athenian wedding ceremony, relying mainly on illustrations of weddings on vases. On Greek marriage as a cultural institution, see Redfield (1982), and more briefly Clark (1998: 13-15). For contrasting view on the apparent connection between marriage and death, see Jenkins (1983) and Ferrari (2005).

²¹ The following references are in Seaford (1986: 52, n. 10 and 1987: 111 n. 62). Groom as sapling: Sappho 115 V, Menander Rhetor 404.7 (palm tree), Greg. Naz. PG 37.1493 v 186 ἔρπει καλῶι; bride as vine embracing sapling groom: Catullus 61.102-105 (*vitis implicat arbores*), 62.49-58 (*si forte eadem est ulmo coniuncta marito*); bride as flower: Sappho 117b (rose), Sappho 105c V (hyacinth), Himerius 1.19 (bride's cheeks like roses), Catullus 61.21-22 (flowering myrtle), 61.187-188 (poppy), 62.39 (*flos in saeptis secretus nascitur hortis*), cf. Soph.

procreation of legitimate children with sometimes ribald encouragement. On a darker note, these songs are also taken up with the anxious feelings of the bride, who is often represented as feeling nervous and fearful about being separated from her family, particularly her mother, and about losing her virginity on the wedding night.²²

Odysseus' speech to Nausicaa contains a *μακαρισμός* (the anaphora of *τρισμακάρες* at verse initial in 6.154-5 followed by the climactic superlative *μακάρτατος* at 158 is among the most noteworthy rhetorical devices of Odysseus' speech). The delicate vagueness of 6.159: ὅς κέ σ' ἐέδνοισι βρίςας οἰκόνδ' ἀγάγεται ("Whoever should lead you home weighted with a bride-price") might be interpreted as a sly attempt on Odysseus' part to nominate himself as a prospective partner for Nausicaa,²³ but Odysseus goes on in his speech to contrast the good fortune of Nausicaa and her future husband with his own wretched bad luck (6.172-174).²⁴ Of course, Odysseus wants Nausicaa to take pity on his shipwrecked self, but he certainly does not cast himself as Nausicaa's lucky groom. Odysseus' *μακαρισμός* embraces Nausicaa, her family,

Tr. 144-145 τὸ γὰρ νεάζον ἐν τοιοῖσδε βόσκεται / χώροισιν αὐτοῦ "the young plant/bride is nurtured in in such places of its/her own" (Easterling, 1982: 93 *ad* 144-7 cites *Il.* 18.56-57 and *Od.* 6.162-163 as parallels); groom as flower: Menander Rhetor 404.7 (rose); bride as sapling: Theocritus 18.30 (cypress), Menander Rhetor 404.7 (olive, apple); bride as fruit tree: Sappho 105a V; bride as plant: Euripides *Hipp.* 630 ἀτηρὸν φυτόν, *Med.* 231 ἀθλιώτατον φυτόν. The wedding feast would have featured *eikazeins* in verse, like Sappho fr. 115 (Hague, 1983: 132). On *eikazeins*, cf. Pelliccia (2002).

²² Seaford (1987) opens his article by commenting on the balance of positive celebration and of negative emotions in marriage songs and notes how plant imagery can serve both roles: Sappho's sapling in fr.115 V praises the appearance of the groom while the trampled hyacinth of fr. 105c V and the threatened apple of 105a V symbolize sexual violence. Catullus also focuses in his wedding songs on the negative aspects of this violence, on which see Edwards (1992). Stigers (1977: 84) calls Catullus 62 "an expression of the struggle to persuade the woman to be receptive to the man."

²³ Gross (1976: 313) implies that Odysseus deliberately misleads Nausicaa with his speech.

²⁴ Odysseus plays for sympathy throughout, but particularly with the plaintive οὐ γὰρ οὔτω / παύσεσθ', ἀλλ' ἔτι πολλὰ θεοὶ τελέουσι πάροιθεν (6.173-174).

and her future husband, but Odysseus' praise does not extend to himself as a member of the prospective wedding.

To demonstrate how careful Odysseus' use of imagery is, let us compare Odysseus' imagery with other images we find in marriage songs, particularly with images for the bride in Sappho. We may begin with floral imagery, which we will see is completely at home in epithalamic poetry but is quite inappropriate for Odysseus' speech. In Sappho 105c V the bride is conceived as a hyacinth trampled by shepherds:

οἷαν τὰν ὑάκινθον ἐν ὥρεσι ποίμενες ἄνδρες
πόσσι καταστείβοισι, χάμαι δέ τε πόρφυρον ἄνθος

Like the hyacinth in the mountains which shepherds
crush down with their feet, and on the ground the crimson flower...

Seaford (1987) and Edwards (1992) observe the violence of this image, which is vividly conveyed in the bloody color of the ruined flower, the blood likely meant to evoke the bride's lost virginity. Sappho gives expression to the pathos of a girl losing her virginity also in fr. 114 V: *παρθενία, παρθενία, ποῖ με λίποις' ἀποίχη* "Virginity, virginity, where have you gone, having abandoned me?"²⁵ Floral imagery would, needless to say, be completely inappropriate for Odysseus' speech because it comes close to representing the threat of rape, which Odysseus must at all costs avoid.²⁶ Flowers are fragile, both in Sappho and in Homer, and susceptible to destruction by the elements. To illustrate this general point one can turn to the simile in the *Iliad*

²⁵ Cf. Redfield (1982: 190): "Virginity is also a moment of power, since the nubile virgin is courted. The pathos of virginity lies in its evanescence; it is like spring, or the dawn, or the evening star (Sappho 104b). Sappho's wedding songs evidently often dramatized this sense of loss (195c, 195e, 114)."

²⁶ Flowers certainly evoke themes of seduction, most prominently in Homer at *Il.* 14.347-349 when the lovemaking of Zeus and Hera causes grass and flowers (including the hyacinth) to sprout spontaneously: *τοῖσι δ' ὑπὸ χθών διὰ φύεν νεοθηλέα ποίην, / λωτόν θ' ἐρσήεντα ἰδὲ κρόκον ἥδ' ὑάκινθον / πυκνὸν καὶ μαλακόν* "and under them the shining earth grew newly-blooming grass, / dewy lotus and crocus and hyacinth thick and soft." On flowers and seduction, cf. Hague (1983: 135-136) and Prauscello (2007: 90, n. 2).

that commemorates the death of the Trojan youth Gorgythion, pierced in the chest by Teucer's arrow (8.302-308):

ὃ δ' ἀμύνονα Γοργυθίωνα
υἷον ἐὺν Πριάμοιο κατὰ στῆθος βάλεν ἰῶι,
τόν ῥ' ἐξ Αἰσύμηθεν ὀπυιομένη τέκε μήτηρ
καλῇ Καστιάνειρα δέμας εἰκυῖα θεῇσιν·
μήκων δ' ὥς ἐτέρωσε κάρη βάλεν, ἥ τ' ἐνὶ κήπῳ
καρπῶι βριθομένη νοτιήσιν τε εἰαρινῇσιν·
ὥς ἐτέρωσ' ἤμυσε κάρη πῆληκι βαρυνθέν.

And he [Teucer] struck blameless Gorgythion
the strong son of Priam through the chest with an arrow,
whom his mother, a married woman from Aesyme,
fair Kastianeira bore, like to goddesses in her appearance;
and he threw his head to one side, like a poppy, which in a garden,
throws its head down, weighted with its fruit and with springtime showers:
in this way, his head, weighted by his helmet, dropped to one side.

Homer and Sappho draw upon flower imagery because both authors want to make vivid the vulnerability of their victims. Still, it is probably not a coincidence that Homer begins the life story of the fallen soldier by alluding to the marriage of his mother, which then leads logically to an image that regularly appears in epithalamic poetry, the sheltered flower, which Homer fits into a martial context.²⁷ The vulnerability of Gorgythion is even more acute because of the delicate contrast between the gentle rains and the fruit, the peaceful garden, and the unthinking rhythms of nature on the one hand and the deliberate violence of the wound taken on the battlefield and the heaviness of the soldier's helmet on the other. The image of the sheltered flower also resembles the young olive tree teeming with flowers (καί τε βρύει ἄνθει λευκῶι, 17.56) to which vulnerable Euphorbus is compared at *Iliad* 17.51-60. Homer softens the impact of the violence when he makes natural forces the cause of the tree's destruction, but Sappho indicates that the hyacinth is destroyed by men, not nature (although we do not know whether the

²⁷ The formulaic δέμας εἰκυῖα θεῇσιν may also in this context contribute to the epithalamic themes of the passage since in marriage songs the bride and groom are often compared to the gods. βριθομένη may also evoke epithalamic themes since the same word recurs in Odysseus' speech (βρίσας, 6.159).

hyacinth was crushed by accident or deliberately). The violence artfully muted in Homer is therefore more pronounced in Sappho. We can further declare after an examination of these passages that such violence would be completely inappropriate to Odysseus' speech because it might frighten or alienate Nausicaa. Odysseus wants to assure Nausicaa that he means her no harm, so he reaches not for the image of a flower but for a sturdier (but still lovely) sapling.

We will discuss in the next section the positives that come with comparing Nausicaa to the young Delian date palm, chief among which is that through such an image he can bring before Nausicaa the image of a holy tree, sacred to the formidable goddess Artemis, before which he felt reverence (σέβας μ' ἔχει εἰσορόωντα, 6.161). There is, however, a significant drawback, a pitfall that Odysseus must avoid. The date palm was best known in antiquity for its sweet fruit,²⁸ but Odysseus makes no mention of dates in his Delian anecdote because he seeks to avoid the sexual symbolism of fruit. In marriage songs, fruit-bearing trees represent fertility, signaling the purpose of the union: the procreation of children, as in Sappho 105a V, quoted above.²⁹ The plucking of fruit from the tree may also symbolize the separation of the bride from her family (Edwards, 1992: 202), a theme which Catullus stresses in his marriage poems.³⁰ In contrast to Sappho and Catullus, Odysseus takes great pains in his speech to imagine Nausicaa united with her whole family: μάλα πού σφισι θυμὸς / αἰὲν ἑὺφροσύνῃσιν ἰαίνεται εἵνεκα σείο, / λευσσόντων τοιόνδε θάλος χορὸν εἰσοιχνεῦσαν ("I suppose their heart / is always glad with

²⁸ Murr (1890: 47).

²⁹ On the bride likened to a date palm, cf. *Song of Songs* 7:7-8 [the groom speaks of the bride]: "Your stature is like that of the palm, and your breasts like clusters of fruit. ⁸I said, "I will climb the palm tree; I will take hold of its fruit." (NIV). On the symbolism of the apple, cf. Littlewood (1968: 155). In Homer, the imagery of fruit sometimes evokes sexual themes, as when Hera puts on earrings the color of mulberries (μορόεντα) before she seduces Zeus (*Il.* 14.183).

³⁰ On the anguish of the bride and her mother arising from the groom seizing the girl out of her arms, cf. esp. Catullus 62.21-22.

good cheer because of you, / as they look upon such a shoot as you entering the dancing-space, *Od.* 6.155-157). This pleasant and festive picture of family unity³¹ diffuses any tension that might be engendered by the mention of a tall tree that bears sweet fruit.³² Odysseus is telling Nausicaa, in other words, that she has nothing to fear: he has no intention of parting her from her family and no interest in her as a potential romantic partner.³³

Finally, it is a little peculiar that Odysseus should liken Nausicaa to a sapling because such a comparison is not used in Sappho of the bride, but rather of the groom. Sappho compares a bridegroom to a slender sapling in fr. 115 V in order to praise his outstanding appearance,³⁴ but in epithalamia generally brides are seldom compared to trees without alluring fruit. Indeed the imagery of Catullus whereby the bride embraces the groom as a grapevine is supported by an elm (62.49-58, cf. 61.102-105) brings across the essential dependence of the bride on the groom. She cannot stand on her own. Odysseus veers away from such themes, playing up the inner strength of Nausicaa because he does not want to imply that she needs him to be her husband.³⁵

³¹ We can compare the picture of Nausicaa dancing here with the foreboding picture of the nubile Iphigeneia who once sang in her father's halls painted by the chorus of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* just before she is gagged and sacrificed in a ceremony that she thought was to be her marriage (*Ag.* 243-247).

³² Mason (2004) notes that apple trees in antiquity would have been taller than apple trees grow today because selection for dwarf trees only began in the Middle Ages. This botanical fact explains why the pickers cannot reach the apple in 105a V.

³³ Analyzing Sappho 105a and 105c Stigers (1977) concludes: "In both modes [whether the bride is a vulnerable flower or an inaccessible apple] the woman is passive vis-à-vis the man. And the man may be careless of what is within reach, neglectful of what is not. So either way the woman may suffer; isolation or destruction may be her fate" (91).

³⁴ Contiades-Tsitsoni (1990: 99) notes that the epithet *βραδύνωι* is used only of Aphrodite. Perhaps the epithet expresses the speaker's hope that the groom will be successful in love.

³⁵ The narrator shows off Nausicaa's resolve when she alone does not retreat in fright at the sight of the bedraggled Odysseus (6.137-140). He credits this courage to Athena.

In short, then, the epithalamic elements of the Nausicaa speech certainly announce that marriage is in the air but it is important to realize how Odysseus adapts the imagery of these songs in a concerted effort to more emphatically praise Nausicaa, to avoid alienating her with explicit references to sex and violence, and to subtly suggest that he is not ultimately interested in marrying her.

REVERENCE FOR ARTEMIS

We spoke in the previous section about the potential risks shouldered by Odysseus when he likens Nausicaa to a palm tree: that such an image, because it looks forward to the painful consummation of a marriage between bride and groom, would upset Nausicaa or invite a romantic entanglement. What advantages, then, does Odysseus gain by speaking of palm trees? And why does he mention Delos specifically? The mention of Delos is profitably read together with the narrator's simile likening Nausicaa to Artemis in the scene on the beach (6.102-109). Delos is associated with Artemis because that island may be her birthplace,³⁶ and, more importantly, because a temple to her was situated there in the archaic period. There is also a tradition, preserved in the *Contest Between Homer and Hesiod* (316-321) that the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* was performed there and later inscribed on a tablet that was dedicated on the walls of this temple to Artemis (Richardson, 2010: 13). The goddess finds Delos the one hospitable place to give birth, leaning upon the famous palm tree (115-118):

εὖτ' ἐπὶ Δήλου ἔβαινε μογοστόκος Εἰλείθυια,
τὴν τότε δὴ τόκος εἶλε, μενοίνησεν δὲ τεκέσθαι.
ἀμφὶ δὲ φοίνικι βάλε πήχεε, γούνα δ' ἔρεισε
λειμῶνι μαλακῶι, μείδησε δὲ Γαί' ὑπένερθεν

When Eileithuia, goddess of birth pangs, came to Delos,
at that time childbirth gripped her [Leto], and she desired to give birth.

³⁶ Ortygia is also named as the birthplace of Artemis (*Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, 16). Ortygia, for the poet of the hymn, may have been a name synonymous with Delos. Cf. Richardson (2010: 84-5 ad 16).

And she threw her arms around the palm tree, and she planted her knees
upon the soft meadow, and the Earth underneath her smiled.

In this passage at least, the palm tree offers sturdy support for Leto who finally releases her burden after a long stretch of wandering from island to island (45-50),³⁷ just as, perhaps, Odysseus hopes to find on Scheria rest from his wanderings. The palm represents salvation for both Leto and Odysseus, and Odysseus may be trying here to plant in Nausicaa's mind the inclination to be hospitable to him by bringing up his sojourn to Delos.

There are two further reasons Odysseus tells his story to Nausicaa. He does so first in order to present himself as a pious suppliant who has no intention of harming or harassing the princess. Secondly, Odysseus tells about Delos in order to placate the goddess before whom Odysseus believes he might be standing. We have spoken above about the nervousness Odysseus feels when he hears the feminine screams that jolt him awake. He wonders whether the women are mortals or nymphs, and, if they are immortal, then their leader will likely be the formidable Artemis, against whom a naked Odysseus, like Actaeon, would not stand a chance at survival. The narrator himself has sown tension into the scene just before Odysseus wakes by comparing Nausicaa among her maidens to Artemis among her nymphs (6.102-109). When Odysseus wakes and gets his bearings, he sees what the narrator sees, so to speak, and he crafts his speech under the assumption that Artemis may be standing before him. The anecdote about the hero paying reverence to the goddess's favorite island, as well as his simile likening Nausicaa to Artemis herself (6.150-152), represent Odysseus' attempts to appease the goddess and free himself from danger.

³⁷ Frazer (1911: 58) believes that this story testifies to a belief among the Greeks that the palm had the power to ensure an easy delivery for the pregnant Leto and adduces as parallels the Swedish *bårdträd* or "guardian-tree" and the Congolese custom that pregnant women wear garments made from the bark of a certain tree with that power.

Despite this danger brewing against Odysseus, the scholarly consensus on the point of the narrator's Artemis simile (6.102-109), as summarized in Hainsworth's comment on the passage, is by no means threatening. According to Hainsworth, the simile extols the "pre-eminence of Nausicaa." He continues, "it would be absurd to deny that the evocation of Artemis, most chaste of goddesses, was not intended to imply the purity of Nausicaa and the innocence of her sport" (300 *ad* 6.109).³⁸

The preeminent beauty and grace of Nausicaa motivate this image of Artemis, in part at least. How else are we to explain the detail of Leto rejoicing? Nevertheless, the Artemis simile contributes importantly to the tension and suspense of the scene, an interpretation that has gone mostly unmade in the literature.³⁹ The reason for the oversight is that scholars have not recognized that the narrator's Artemis simile and Odysseus' Artemis simile have different poetic effects: Odysseus sticks to straightforward praise while the narrator includes details that build a foreboding atmosphere. The two similes are as follows:

οἷη δ' Ἄρτεμις εἴσι κατ' οὔρεα ἰοχέαιρα,
ἢ κατὰ Τηϋγετον περιμήκετον ἢ Ἐρύμανθον,
τερπομένη κάπροισι καὶ ὠκείῃς ἐλάφοισι·
τῇ δέ θ' ἅμα Νύμφαι, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,
ἄγρονόμοι παίζουσι· γέγηθε δέ τε φρένα Λητώ·
πασάων δ' ὑπὲρ ἣ γε κάρη ἔχει ἡδὲ μέτωπα,
ῥεῖά τ' ἀριγνώτη πέλεται, καλαὶ δέ τε πᾶσαι·

³⁸ Similarly, van Nortwick (1979: 272) suggests this simile accentuates Nausicaa's "youth and virginity." Cf. Kakridis (1971: 141-150) on *Od.* 6.108: ῥεῖά τ' ἀριγνώτη πέλεται, καλαὶ δέ τε πᾶσαι ([Nausicaa] was easily visible, though they all were beautiful): "It is certainly high praise if a woman is said to be more beautiful than other women; but when it is said that she is more beautiful than other *beautiful* women, the praise gains in value" (144). Departing from the consensus, Watrous (1999: 176) implies that the image of Artemis suggests a threat to Odysseus by arguing for a link between Artemis and the *Potnia Theron* "the Mistress of Animals" and concluding therefore that an ironic contrast is played out in the similes between the Mistress (Nausicaa) who "tames" Odysseus, the hungry, worn-down lion (*Od.* 6.130-136).

³⁹ Watrous (1999) is one exception: for him the narrator's simile likening Nausicaa to Artemis "does not simply pay tribute to Nausikaa's youthful beauty, but represents that beauty in a context of implied threat, for secluded dances are rarely safe from the watchful eyes of a potential attacker" (168).

ὥς ἥ γ' ἀμφιπόλοισι μετέπρεπε παρθένος ἀδμῆς.

And she goes, like Artemis the arrow pourer goes through the mountains,
whether through lofty Taygetus or Erymanthus,
taking pleasure in her boars and swift fawns;
and together with her the Nymphs, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus,
who haunt the country play; and Leto rejoices in her mind;
and she is taller than them all by a head and her forehead,
and she is easily recognized, though all [the nymphs] are beautiful:
in this way the unmarried maiden stood out among her maids. (102-109)

εἰ μὲν τις θεός ἐσσι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν,
Ἄρτεμιδί σε ἐγὼ γε, Διὸς κούρη μέγαλοιο,
εἶδός τε μέγεθός τε φυὴν τ' ἄγχιστα εἴσκω.

If you are a god, [those] who hold the broad sky,
I liken you to Artemis, daughter of great Zeus
most closely for your appearance, your height and your stature. (150-152)

In her commentary on Odysseus' Artemis simile, de Jong remarks "Odysseus compares Nausicaa with Artemis for the same reasons as the narrator in 101-9: her divine beauty and her virginity. This is the only time in Homer that narrator and character use the same comparison in connection with the same event/person" (2001: 161 *ad* 6.151-2). We can with profit, however, distinguish the two Artemis similes. True, when Odysseus likens Nausicaa to Artemis, he is trying to get on her good side, so he praises her beauty. The narrator has different goals: he is concerned throughout the scene to build suspense and create a potentially dangerous predicament for Odysseus to extricate himself from.⁴⁰ The reference to Nausicaa's appearance is much more explicit in Odysseus' speech (εἶδός τε μέγεθός τε φυὴν, 152). Artemis' appearance in the narrator's simile is not described the same way: yes, the goddess is conspicuous (ἀριγνώτη, 108; cf. μετέπρεπε, 109) and the company of nymphs is beautiful (καλαί), but these descriptors

⁴⁰ Cf. Garvie's (1995) comments on 6.85-109, "We are kept waiting for the encounter between Nausicaa and Odysseus, whom we know to be asleep in the bushes (5.491-3)." (103) and 6.110-18, "All this time H. has kept us in suspense as to how he will arrange the encounter between Nausicaa and the sleeping Odysseus," (109) and de Jong (2001) on 6.85-109: "Through this uneventful episode (the girls do what they set out to do, wash the clothes, and then have a bath, eat, and play with a ball), the narrator heightens the tension: when will the confrontation with Odysseus finally take place?" (156).

lend to the passage more than anything a distinctly edgy voyeuristic tinge because, unbeknownst to the women, Odysseus is asleep nearby. These similes are not straightforward praise of Nausicaa's appearance.⁴¹

The implicit sense of danger comes to the fore also in the hunting theme that occupies so much of this simile.⁴² Tense notes are also struck with the words *ιοχέαιρα* (104) because the goddess is armed while Odysseus is not, and *ἀγρονόμοι* (106) because this adjective may foreshadow Odysseus' *ὑβρισταί τε καὶ ἄγριοι οὐδὲ δίκαιοι* (6.120), and signal that Odysseus is not out of trouble yet.

There is a glimmer here of the cautionary tale of Actaeon, the hunter turned into a stag by Artemis, which would better explain the peculiar references in the simile to Artemis hunting.⁴³ In addition, further details of the Actaeon myth—specifically of the exact crime that spurred Artemis to punish Actaeon—dovetail nicely with Odysseus' situation in Phaeacia. Our sources for the Actaeon story explain his punishment as the result of different crimes. The earliest writer we know of who treated the story of Actaeon was Stesichorus (6th century BCE). In his version,

⁴¹ Scott (1974: 68-70) observes that Homeric characters are compared to gods when they are about to make an attack on the battlefield and upon their entrance into the narrative. de Jong (2001: 156 *ad* 6.101-9) notes only three other long similes in which mortals are compared to gods: *Il.* 2.478-483 (Agamemnon compared to Zeus, Ares, and Poseidon), 7.208-212 (Ajax compared to Ares), 13.298-305 (Meriones and Idomeneus compared to Ares and Phobus).

⁴² Garvie (1995: 107 *ad* 6.102-9) notes in passing that the details about Artemis hunting do not fit very well with the context of the simile, but, after a disclaimer that the “picture exists partly for its own sake,” he justifies its overall relevance to the context by pointing out that in both situations the groups of women are enjoying themselves and that happy Leto corresponds to Nausicaa's happy family.

⁴³ Redfield (1982: 191) and Ahl and Roisman (1996: 53) in passing sketch the similarities between Actaeon and Odysseus. Redfield argues that Odysseus presents himself as an anti-Actaeon to Artemis/Nausicaa: “There [in the wild] her [Artemis'] chastity is sexually charged, extremely attractive and extremely dangerous, as Actaeon discovered. Odysseus plays on these qualities when he emerges from the sea as a kind of monster and remembers to tell Nausicaa that she is beautiful and also safe, that she is not, for instance, Persephone, liable to be raped while at play with her companions in the water meadows.”

surviving only in Pausanias' paraphrase (9.2.3), Actaeon's hounds killed him after Artemis clothed him with a deerskin,⁴⁴ and the goddess thereby ensured through his death that Actaeon would not marry Semele who had been betrothed to Zeus.⁴⁵ The version familiar to us from Ovid, that Actaeon inadvertently stumbled upon Artemis bathing and that in anger she transformed him into a deer, is alluded to in Callimachus' fifth hymn (113-114), while another account, preserved in Diodorus Siculus (4.81.4), tells that Actaeon forced himself upon Artemis after a hunt.⁴⁶ Given that most of these accounts of Actaeon's error are so exiguous and so molded to other myths, it is impossible to trace the chronological development of the Actaeon myth with rigorous exactness using our extant sources: the earliest preserved source does not necessarily preserve the earliest tradition (Lacey, 1990). Nevertheless, we see that the Actaeon story was told as early as the sixth century, a century perhaps after the genesis of the written *Odyssey*, and we may suppose that the Actaeon story was known to bards before Stesichorus. The fact that in our earliest versions Actaeon is punished for setting his eye on a maiden betrothed to someone else is suggestive since Nausicaa has suitors, too (6.282-284). Also, after Nausicaa and her attendants have finished the laundry, they bathe and anoint themselves with oil (αἱ δὲ λοεσσάμεναι καὶ χρисάμεναι λίπ' ἐλαίῳ, 6.96) just as Artemis bathes in Callimachus and Ovid. Just before the simile, Nausicaa and her attendants have cast off their veils to play ball (ἀπὸ κρήδεμνα βαλοῦσαι, 100), just as Artemis and her nymphs are undressed for their bath. The reference to deer in the Odyssean Artemis simile (ὠκείης ἐλάφοισι, 104) may evoke

⁴⁴ Rose (1931) and Nagy (1973) interpret Pausanias' Greek ἐλάφου περιβαλεῖν δέρμα Ἀκταίωνι metaphorically to mean that Actaeon was actually transformed into a deer.

⁴⁵ Actaeon's story was also told in the Hesiodic Catalogue of Women (contemporaneous with Stesichorus); according to Fr. 161A Most Actaeon wanted to marry Semele and was transformed into a deer and mutilated by his hunting dogs.

⁴⁶ Furthermore, in Euripides' *Bacchae* (337-341), Cadmus warns Pentheus to accept Dionysus and not to follow the example of Actaeon who boasted that he was a better hunter than Artemis.

Actaeon's punishment. The narrator is subtly setting Actaeon up as a foil for Odysseus in order to further ratchet up the suspense of the scene before Odysseus' pivotal speech.

In the speech itself Odysseus establishes that he is a pious but powerful man, an argument both to calm Nausicaa and placate Artemis. The importance of Odysseus' piety becomes clear just before the critical image of the Delian palm. Odysseus says to Nausicaa *σέβας μ' ἔχει εἰσπορόωντα* "Reverence holds me as I look [upon you]" (161). The verb here is the operative word: Odysseus will stand still and is not going to charge forward or attack Nausicaa and the girls, despite his appearance. As Stanford (1963 [1954]: 52-53) eloquently puts it, "A deft comparison of her slender stature with a palm-tree at Delos enables him to imply that he himself is a man who goes on religious pilgrimages with a large retinue—no irreligious tramp, whatever his present appearance suggests."⁴⁷ By appealing explicitly to his religiosity, Odysseus shrewdly covers his bases. If Nausicaa is mortal, she is bound to be impressed by Odysseus' piety and sensitivity, and if Odysseus is beseeching Artemis in mortal form he has picked the ideal image. The comparison of Nausicaa to the palm on Delos, if it were addressed to Artemis herself, argues that Odysseus is worth pity and salvation because he is pious, just as the goddess herself found respite on the island. Like a supplicant unfurling a catalogue of earlier benefactions that justifies why the god should grant his prayer, Odysseus uses the image of the palm in an account of his past good behavior.⁴⁸ The palm, since it is closely associated iconographically with Artemis

⁴⁷ Cf. Harder (1988: 513) who follows along Stanford's general line: "Er flicht so geschickt ein, daß er nicht irgendein gestrandeter Ruderknecht ist." "[Odysseus] weaves in so skillfully that he is not just any stranded slave-rower."

⁴⁸ Chryseis' prayer to Apollo at *Iliad* 1.37-42 is the textbook case. Cf. also Apollo's misgivings at the mutilation of Hector's corpse because the body of such a pious hero ought not be so poorly treated (24.33-54).

according to Sourvinou-Inwood (1991) and the Mistress of Animals according to Marinatos (1984), is the perfect image for this appeal.

Odysseus goes on to contrast his present poor fortune with Nausicaa's excellent prospects. Odysseus attributes his bad luck to the gods (*νῦν δ' ἐνθάδε κάββαλε δαίμων*, 6.172) and adopts a stance of abject resignation to his fate (*οὐ γὰρ οἶω / παύσεσθ', ἀλλ' ἔτι πολλὰ θεοὶ τελέουσι πάροιθεν*, 173-4), implying that he is powerless to do anything about his circumstances, all while he is making an effort to persuade Nausicaa to help him improve his station. Be that as it may, Odysseus showers praise on Nausicaa using religious language. The anaphora of *τρισμάκαρες* (154, 155) not only contributes to the epithalamic themes of Odysseus' speech but also expresses Odysseus' reverence. The anaphora forms the first part of a three-part priamel that proclaims the blessedness first of Nausicaa's family, then of her future husband, and finally of Nausicaa herself, reaching its peak with the description of the palm tree that shows her at her most lovely. At the close of the speech, Odysseus wishes that the gods continue to smile on Nausicaa by leading her into a good marriage (*σοὶ δὲ θεοὶ τόσα δοῖεν, ὅσα φρεσὶ σῇσι μανοινῶς* "may the gods grant you everything you desire in your heart," 6.180), a closing both friendly and pious.

To sum up then, Odysseus' actions and the form and substance of his speech are designed to present him as a god-fearing hero who happens to be down on his luck. He works to reassure Nausicaa that she is in no danger but also, and perhaps more importantly, to protect himself from the vengeance of Artemis, adopting the posture of a suppliant in order to gain his passage home.

SAPLING IMAGERY IN HOMER

We began this chapter with the observation that the palm imagery in *Odyssey* 6 was unique to the Homeric corpus, and so we sought analogues for Odysseus' speech outside of

Homer, finding the epithalamic background in Sappho and religiosity in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. We can, however, use the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to understand better how Odysseus uses the terms ἔρνος “shoot” and θάλος “sapling” because these words are part of the poems’ vocabulary (ἔρνος appears in four other passages besides Odysseus’ speech; θάλος once).

Now while the number of passages that feature these words is small, still a consistent and meaningful pattern of usage emerges when we consider these passages together. In brief, θάλος and ἔρνος are used symbolically in Homer by parents (by both fathers and mothers) in speeches lamenting the imminent deaths of their male children.⁴⁹ Odysseus, then, departs from the pattern in two respects: first, he uses the image not to lament Nausicaa’s death but to praise her appearance, and, secondly, he uses it of a girl unknown and unrelated to him. To be sure, a tone of lament for Nausicaa’s fortune would be completely out of place in Odysseus’ complimentary address (the hero reserves the chagrin for his own sufferings, which, conveniently, cause Nausicaa’s lovely untroubled life to stand out all the more). That saplings stand in for children in all the Homeric passages is, however, an important clue to its usage by Odysseus here. Given this Homeric pattern, it must be the case that Odysseus uses this imagery to present himself as a parental figure to Nausicaa, not, for example, as a potential bridegroom. He does so in order to quash a romance that might blossom between them.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Thetis mournfully likens Achilles to a sheltered ἔρνος “sapling” (*Il.* 18.56, 437). The word appears in the simile that coincides with the death of Euphorbus of the olive shoot to which the doomed warrior is likened (*Il.* 17.53). Eumaeus, worried about Telemachus abroad, likens the boy to an ἔρνος as well (*Od.* 14.175). Hecuba calls Hector θάλος just before he falls at Achilles’ hands (*Il.* 22.87). On the use of θάλος by parents in Homer, cf. LfGE s.v.: “Sprößling, liebevoll-bewundernd (‘Practexemplar’) aus Elternsicht.”

⁵⁰ Lest the reader think that given the typical disparity in age between groom and bride in antiquity suggests that in fact Odysseus and Nausicaa are the right age to marry, Oakley and Sinos (1993: 10) cite a range of passages including, from the archaic period, Hesiod *Op.* 695-

A survey of the relevant passages demonstrates these trends. ἔρνος, for instance, appears in Iliadic battle narrative within the simile that commemorates the death of Euphorbus, the killer of Patroclus (17:51-60):

αἶματί οἱ δεύοντο κόμαι Χαρίτεσσιν ὁμοῖαι
πλοχμοὶ θ', οἳ χρυσῷ τε καὶ ἀργύρῳ ἐσφῆκωντο.
οἶον δὲ τρέφει ἔρνος ἀνὴρ ἐριθηλὲς ἐλαίης
χώρῳ ἐν οἰοπόλῳ, ὅθ' ἄλις ἀναβέβροχεν ὕδωρ,
καλὸν τηλεθάον· τὸ δέ τε πνοιαί δονέουσιν
παντοίων ἀνέμων, καὶ τε βρῦει ἀνθεῖ λευκῶι·
ἐλθὼν δ' ἐξαπίνης ἄνεμος σὺν λαίλαπι πολλῇ
βόθρου τ' ἐξέστρεψε καὶ ἐξέτανυσσ' ἐπὶ γαίῃ,
τοῖον Πανθόου υἱόν, ἐϋμμελίην Εὐφορβον,
Ἄτρείδης Μενέλαος ἐπεὶ κτάνε, τεύχε' ἐσύλα.

And Euphorbus' hair like that of the Graces was wet with blood
and his locks, which were twisted with gold and silver.
And like the flourishing shoot of an olive tree which a man raises
in a lonely land, when rain wets it in abundance,
beautiful, blooming; and the gusts of all the winds shake it,
and it teems with white flowers:
and suddenly the wind, having come with much storminess
rips the tree from its trench and stretches it upon the earth:
like this shoot was the son of Panthous, Euphorbus, good with the ash spear,
when the son of Atreus Menelaus killed him and stripped his armor.

In our second chapter (pp. 70-71), we commented how this simile was unique among the tree-similes employed to memorialize the deaths of warriors in that a windstorm manages to blow down this olive shoot (57-58). From this we concluded that saplings are particularly vulnerable to the ravages of nature. The other details of this simile are evocative, too: that it takes place in desolate country (χώρῳ ἐν οἰοπόλῳ, 54), that the tree's only caregiver is a single devoted man whose efforts to tend the tree must have been considerable given how beautifully the tree grows with flowers (56). The poet starkly contrasts the patient effort of the gardener with the sudden violence of the storm that ruins the tree (ἐξαπίνης, 57). This tree, especially because it is young and sheltered, is particularly vulnerable to the elements, nor, it follows, did it reach the point of

697 and Solon 27 W.9-10 that show that the ideal age for a groom was only thirty (the bride would be a teenager).

bearing fruit to profit the gardener who tended it.⁵¹ The loss of this tree, then, strikingly captures the waste of a promising young life (suggested by the beauty of the sheltered tree) which had not time to reach its full potential; the gardener stands perhaps for Euphorbus' father; the tone is pure lament.⁵²

The associations of this word with lament become even more apparent later on in the *Iliad* when Thetis, doomed to suffer the death of her son, uses the word to describe Achilles in her lament for him (18.54-60) and when she asks Hephaestus to construct armor for him (18.437-441). I quote 18.54-60 here:

ὦι μοι ἐγὼ δειλή, ὦι μοι δυσαριστοτόκεια,
ἧ τ' ἐπεὶ ἄρ' τέκον υἱὸν ἀμύμονά τε κρατερόν τε,
ἐξοχὸν ἡρώων· ὃ δ' ἀνέδραμεν ἔρνεϊ ἴσος,
τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ θρέψασα φυτὸν ὥς γουνῶι ἄλωῃς
νηυσὶν ἐπὶ προέηκα κορωνίσιν Ἴλιον εἴσω
Τρῶσιν μαχησόμενον· τὸν δ' οὐχ ὑποδέξομαι αὖτις
οἰκαδὲ νοστήσαντα δόμον Πηληϊὸν εἴσω.

Oh woe is me, wretched, oh woe is me who bore the best son for a dire fate,
since I bore a blameless and strong son
outstanding of heroes; and he shot up like a shoot;
whom I, once I nourished him like a tree in the fertile part of the orchard,
sent forth to Ilium with curved ships
to fight with the Trojans; but I will not receive him again
when he returns home to Peleus' house.

The physical strength of Achilles that surpasses other heroes contrasts with the truth left unspoken that Achilles is soon to die. This fact leads Thetis to use the strikingly oxymoronic epithet *δυσαριστοτόκεια*. As with Euphorbus, the nurture in the protective orchard is no help to

⁵¹ This motif also appears in the eulogy for Simoesius whom Homer compares to a poplar as he lies dying (*Il.* 4.477-479): οὐδὲ τοκεῦσιν / θρέπτρα φίλοις ἀπέδωκε, μινυνθάδιος δέ οἱ αἰῶν / ἔπλεθ' ὑπ' Αἴαντος μεγαθύμου δουρὶ δαμέντι "but he [Simoesius] did not give back / a recompense to his dear parents, but his lifespan was short / since he was overcome by the spear of great-hearted Ajax."

⁵² Cf. Macleod (1982: 49-50): "Here the simile expresses...not only the beauty of the young man, but also the care of the parents, whose bereavement is so often mentioned in Homeric descriptions of deaths."

Achilles on the battlefield, exposed as he is to death just as the sapling is exposed to the violence of wind, fire, and axe-blade. ἔρνος, therefore, continues to be associated with the lament of parents for sons lost in battle or to be lost in battle.

θάλος is synonymous with ἔρνος and appears in similar contexts. It is used only of Nausicaa in Odysseus' speech and of Hector in the *Iliad*. Hecuba, pleading for Hector to retreat to safety behind the walls of Troy, addresses Hector pathetically as her sapling (22.86-89):

εἴ περ γάρ σε κατακτάνη, οὐ σ' ἔτ' ἐγὼ γε
κλαύσομαι ἐν λεχέεσσι, φίλον θάλος, ὃν τέκον αὐτή,
οὐδ' ἄλοχος πολυδωρος, ἀνενθε δέ σε μέγα νῶϊν
Ἀργείων παρὰ νηυσὶ κύνες ταχέες κατέδονται.

If he kills you, I will not mourn you
on a funeral bier, dear shoot, whom I myself bore,
nor will your rich-dowered wife, and very far away from us
the swift dogs will devour you at the ships of the Argives.

It is striking that both major heroes are addressed by their mothers as saplings, though they fight on opposite sides. A mother's love and a mother's grief are universal consequences of war. Here as much as anywhere the poet shows the reserves of humanity which Simone Weil found so admirable.⁵³ In this passage we see how much Hector will lose when he dies, how his family will be sundered irreparably by war. Indeed this picture of Hector's family could not be further from the happy family Odysseus imagines Nausicaa to have, where father, mother, brothers, and

⁵³ Weil finds the *Iliad* virtually unique among works of western literature because of its refusal to sentimentalize the violence of combat for either side: "Nothing is so rare as to see misfortune fairly portrayed; the tendency is either to treat the unfortunate person as though catastrophe were his natural vocation, or to ignore the effects of misfortune on the soul, to assume, that is, that the soul can suffer and remain unmarked by it, can fail, in fact, to be recast in misfortune's image" (2005 [1945]: 35).

fiancé delight in Nausicaa's promise as a wife and mother as she dances, lovely as a shoot (6.157).⁵⁴

In the *Odyssey* Eumaeus uses ἔρνος of Telemachus, whom he fears will perish because of the suitors' machinations (14.174-177):

νῦν αὖ παιδὸς ἄλαστον ὀδύρομαι, ὃν τέκ' Ὀδυσσεύς,
Τηλεμάχον· τὸν ἐπεὶ θρέψαν θεοὶ ἔρνεϊ ἴσον,
καί μιν ἔφην ἔσσεσθαι ἐν ἀνδράσιν οὔ τι χέρεια
πατρὸς εἰοί φίλοιό, δέμας καὶ εἶδος ἀγητόν

Now in turn I grieve unceasingly for the son whom Odysseus fathered,
Telemachus; since the gods raised him like a shoot,
and I said that he would in no way be worse among men
than his dear father, in his stature and admirable appearance.

In this passage the sapling imagery contributes to an irony of situation in that Telemachus is not really dead or fated to die. The poet extends to the devoted Eumaeus the privilege reserved in the *Iliad* to parents to address Telemachus as a sapling. Telemachus is no Iliadic warrior destined to die heroically on the battlefield, and Eumaeus imagines he will die in an ambush at home in Ithaca (this difference is attributable to the different plots of the epics). Eumaeus suggests that the gods, not Telemachus' father, have raised him, a marked contrast with the Euphorbus passage where the devoted (mortal) gardener tended the young shoot. Finally, the irony is capped by the fact that Eumaeus eulogizes Telemachus in front of Telemachus' real father who is in disguise.

The image of the palm in *Odyssey* 6, evocative as it is of the parent-child bond under threat, therefore, suggests that Odysseus speaks to Nausicaa not as a prospective groom but as a

⁵⁴ Cf. Harder (1988: 513-514) who compares Nausicaa's outstanding potential to a palm-frond about to unfurl itself: "Sie [Nausikaa] ist im heiratsfähigen Alter, also an der Schwelle ihrer eigentlichen Bestimmung als Ehefrau und Mutter, so, wie das junge Palmblatt dabei ist, sich zu entrollen." (She [Nausicaa] is at marriageable age, thus at the threshold of her own purpose as wife and mother, just like the palm frond, to unfurl herself). Harder also advances the argument that δόρυ (6.167), is best explained as referring to the spear-like shape of the palm frond (512), not, as it is usually taken, as referring to the living tree.

father does to a child. Odysseus' speech may reveal more about his own state of mind than it does about Nausicaa's appearance. He praises her appearance and her flourishing family not only to flatter his hosts and secure passage home but also because in Nausicaa he sees a reflection of his own family, especially of Telemachus.⁵⁵ The cap of the speech, too, then, that nothing is finer than a compatible marriage, is ultimately about the bond that he and Penelope share,⁵⁶ another moment that looks forward to the reunion of Penelope and Odysseus and effectively closes the possibility of a liaison between Odysseus and Nausicaa.

CONCLUSION

Odysseus, then, deploys the sapling imagery to make three interrelated arguments, all designed to tactfully avoid a possible romantic relationship with Nausicaa so that he can make his way to Ithaca as soon as possible. First, though the imagery and argument of his speech resembles an epithalamic song, Odysseus, by comparing Nausicaa to a sapling, creates an image more appropriate for a groom than a bride. This departure from epithalamic norms diffuses romantic tension, praises Nausicaa for being independent-minded, and shows that he does not see her in the role of a subservient bride. Secondly, the anecdote about the palm on Delos, directed both to Nausicaa and to Artemis shows Odysseus at his most pious. To Nausicaa, on the one hand, the story assuages any fears the princess may have for her safety on the grounds that a man of such restraint would never harm a vulnerable girl. To Artemis, on the other hand, the anecdote pleads that the goddess be merciful to a mortal who has paid reverence to the goddess

⁵⁵ On connections between Nausicaa and Telemachus, see Belmont (1967).

⁵⁶ Cf. Stanford (1963 [1954]: 53): "He [Odysseus] ends with a wish that must have come from the heart of a man separated for so long from his own wife." Bolmarcich (2001), too, argues that Odysseus' use of the word *ὁμοφροσύνη* strengthens the bond between himself and Penelope (by associating it with social bonds between males); she does not, however, read Odysseus's famous lines about marriage in the context of Odysseus' speech to Nausicaa, nor does she speculate about how these lines are meant to affect Nausicaa.

in the past. Thirdly, based on the fact that in the rest of the Homeric corpus sapling/human likenesses are used by parents of their children, we can conclude that Odysseus uses the shoot and sapling imagery of Nausicaa to present himself as a father figure to the princess, not as a potential husband, a man oppressed by bad luck, but worthy of being rescued, resuscitated, and returned to his native country.

Chapter 5: The Roots of Odysseus and Penelope's Marriage: A Reconciliation of Nature and Culture

σοὶ δὲ θεοὶ τόσα δοῖεν ὅσα φρεσὶ σῇσι μενοινᾶς,
ἄνδρα τε καὶ οἶκον καὶ ὁμοφροσύνην ὁπάσειαν
ἔσθλῃν· οὐ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ γε κρείσσουν καὶ ἄρειον,
ἢ ὅθ' ὁμοφρονέοντε νοήμασιν οἶκον ἔχῃτον
ἀνὴρ ἢ δὲ γυνή· πόλλ' ἄλγεα δυσμενέεσσι,
χάρματα δ' εὐμενέτησι· μάλιστα δέ τ' ἔκλυον αὐτοί. (*Od.* 6.180-185)

And may the gods give to you everything you desire in your heart,
may they grant you a husband and a household and a noble
unity of mind; for there is nothing greater or better than this,
when two people have their household, united in their thoughts,
a husband and a wife; a source of many pains to those that think ill of them,
but a source of joy to well wishers; and they have a good reputation.

With these words Odysseus closes the speech to Nausicaa that eventually wins his homecoming. I open this chapter on Odysseus and Penelope's olive wood bedpost with the hero's famous words on like-mindedness because they, at an early point in the *Odyssey*, define the goal toward which Odysseus strives. What is more, these tender words articulate why Odysseus' homecoming is so important to him and so create a window through which the audience can glimpse his state of mind. Here at the end of Odysseus' speech we see how his deep bond with his wife motivates his words and actions toward Nausicaa.¹ We showed in the previous chapter how Odysseus recognizes that Nausicaa threatens the prospect of his homecoming, and, in response to that threat, crafts his reminiscence of the palm. He draws on epithalamic associations that appeal to Nausicaa while his mind nevertheless remains trained on

¹ Many commentators suppose Odysseus must be thinking of Penelope by the end of the speech. Stanford (1963 [1954]): 53), with a characteristically lyrical turn of phrase, declares: "He ends with a wish that must have come from the heart of a man separated for so long from his own wife." Further, Garvie (1995: 127 *ad* 6.180-5): "Harmony between husband and wife is something dear to the heart of Odysseus himself, as he looks forward to his eventual reunion with Penelope." de Jong (2001: 161 *ad* 6.180-5) suggests that the fact the Odysseus speaks from the experience of being in a harmonious marriage may be lost on Nausicaa: "The narrates may hear in his passionate plea for the 'concord' (ὁμοφροσύνην, ὁμοφρονέοντε) of man and wife a wish where Odysseus himself and Penelope are concerned."

Ithaca and Penelope. Odysseus underlines like-mindedness as the principal theme here by including both the noun and participial forms in successive lines (181, 182) and by placing the strongly positive evaluative adjective ἐσθλήν (modifying ὁμοφροσύνην) in prominent verse initial position (182). Furthermore, Odysseus disengages from Nausicaa in these last lines, speaking no longer about her specifically as he had been. Instead he turns his mind toward harmonious unions in general, taking his own marriage with Penelope as a model for his reflections. Indeed, here Odysseus strongly suggests to Nausicaa that he is married, and therefore, unavailable, expressing more emphatically at the close what he has implied throughout the course of the speech. These general reflections take on a programmatic importance, whose themes course through the *Odyssey* and culminate with the recognition in Book 23.² They serve as an unmoving counterweight (like John Donne’s compass in “A Valediction Forbidding Mourning”) to the impulses of wandering and delay that drive the narrative engine of the *Odyssey*.³

It is precisely this like-mindedness that Odysseus must work to restore when Penelope tests him during the recognition scene in Book 23. Faced with Penelope’s test, Odysseus deploys a carefully constructed speech—like the bed itself—designed to affirm his identity as culture-hero, master craftsman and king. Odysseus proves that he alone has strength and skill

² On the programmatic importance of *homophrosyne* to the *Odyssey* as a whole, cf. Bolmarcich (2001).

³ Cf. Austin (1975: 228), who aptly describes the olive-wood marriage bed as an “anchor” for the wandering Odysseus. The last stanza of Donne’s poem is worth quotation: “Such wilt thou be to me, who must, / Like the other foot, obliquely run; / Thy firmness makes my circle just, / and makes me end where I begun.” As we shall see, according to most readings of the bed’s symbolism, Odysseus’ anchored bed and Donne’s compass perform similar symbolic work. Donne wishes that his lover demonstrate a Penelopean constancy and patience that will guarantee that their union will not be sundered just as Odysseus hopes that the carefully crafted and deeply rooted bed has protected the integrity of his household during his years abroad.

enough to master the tree and harness the tree's vital energy so that it can maintain the integrity of his marriage and his household for all the time he is abroad at Troy. The king's speech succeeds at reconciling husband with wife on the level of the poem's plot, but it contains an allegorical dimension, too. Odysseus' story about crafting his bedpost ultimately reconciles nature with culture.

I am interested to show by the end of this chapter how Odysseus' speech resolves Homer's ambivalence toward craftsmanship. On the one hand the poet celebrates the devices of his much-devising hero Odysseus, especially in the Cyclopeia in which the human culture-hero crushes the savage Polyphemus, as we shall discuss below. At the same time Homer rues the reality that craftsmanship, like warfare, can be a violent business. The tree similes of the *Iliad*'s battle narrative show again and again that the birth of culture is gained by the death of nature. Both poems also insist that cultural artifacts, like the men that build them, cannot last permanently, unlike trees, especially firmly-rooted trees, which are among the hardiest of living things. In creating his bedpost, Odysseus finds a way for nature and culture to coexist by fashioning a cultural object that nevertheless retains its natural vigor.

Within the reunion scene itself, the bed stands symbolically for both Odysseus and Penelope. Odysseus claims to have inscribed the olive tree with his own unique signature (ἐπεὶ μέγα σῆμα τέτυκται / ἐν λέχει ἀσκητῶ, 23.189-190). The tree, then, is marked, just as Odysseus' own body is marked by the scar which the boar inflicted (19.392-394). Both the scar and the bed are signs of recognition by which the king is recognized, first by Euricleia, then by Penelope. At the same time, by describing the bed as he does, Odysseus also defines Penelope's place in their household. He shows that he understands Penelope's important position at the center. The rooted olive tree has rightly been taken to symbolize Penelope's fidelity, and the

durability of their marital bond.⁴ Indeed, the surge of interest in Penelope's dilemma in Books 17-23 by scholars like Murnaghan (1987), Winkler (1990), Katz (1991), Holmberg (1995; 2003), and Felson-Rubin (1994; 1996) has greatly enhanced our understanding of this climactic recognition scene.⁵ These scholars read this scene from Penelope's perspective, stressing the significance of her decision and by carefully considering her decision-making in these books and her state of mind as she interacts intimately with Odysseus in disguise, appears to the suitors to extract gifts from them, and sets the contest of the bow.⁶

If in this chapter we focus more on the character of Odysseus, we do so in order to complement the recent work on the scene undertaken to understand Penelope's role. For the bed is a multivalent symbol; it stands for both Odysseus and Penelope, as Zeitlin (1996: 22-24) and Nagler (1996: 160-161) rightly bring out, a sign of Odysseus' outstanding craftsmanship and a

⁴ This is the standard reading of the image. See, for example, Zeitlin (1996: 23), with her references to the earlier scholarship of Clarke (1967), Beye (1968), and Thornton (1970).

⁵ These scholars interpret Penelope's decision-making along a number of different lines. Psychological readings, according to which Penelope intuitively identifies the identity of Odysseus, include Amory (1963) and Austin (1975). More recently, narratologically inclined readings like those of Emlyn-Jones (2009 [1984]), Katz (1991) and Felson-Rubin (1994) have shown how the recognition of Penelope toys with expected story patterns. Foley (1999: 241-262) interprets the rooted bed as a reliable symbol that connects our *Odyssey* to the larger theme of *nostos* through traditional referentiality. Jamison (1999) compares the plight of Penelope to the quandaries faced by abandoned brides in Sanskrit literature.

⁶ For a concise recent statement about Penelope's dilemma, see Steiner (2010: 25-28) with references to recent scholarship. The central questions are at what point of the story Penelope recognizes the stranger as Odysseus and how intuitive or fact-based her recognition is. For a more detailed survey of scholarly opinions on these questions, see Murnaghan (1994), who despite her praise of Winkler's (1990) "compelling" (77) reading of the *Odyssey*, maintains the position she articulated in *Disguise and Recognition* (1987) that Penelope recognizes Odysseus only in Book 23. Foley (1995), too, scrutinizes Penelope's decision-making and state of mind and argues that her decision to stage the bow contest is tragic in an Aristotelian sense.

symbol of Penelope's exceptional patience at the same time.⁷ Homer compels his audience to understand the bed in these two ways simultaneously. This richly layered symbolism forms an important part of the subtle interaction of the pair in this scene. Indeed, the poet further reinforces this double reading through his celebrated reverse simile likening Penelope to the shipwrecked sailor, showing how the two reunite as they at last understand and appreciate each other's suffering (*Od.* 23.234-240).⁸ *Homophrosyne* demands that we read Odysseus and Penelope as players of equal importance in this scene.

On a more basic level, of course, Odysseus' two speeches on marriage in Books 6 and 23 are linked because both feature tree imagery. From this coincidence we see further evidence that tree imagery and marriage share a kindred bond in the *Odyssey*. We shall continue to illustrate this connection more deeply in this chapter by focusing at last on the hardiness of this mature olive tree (after focusing rather insistently in the *Iliad*-centered chapters 2 and 3 on the fragility of trees and in the previous chapter on the immature palm sapling). As we did with the speeches we analyzed in the previous three chapters, we shall here examine the force of the arboreal imagery in Odysseus' speech and ask how this imagery contributes to the argument. We shall see that roots are the distinctive feature of this speech and play the decisive role in Odysseus' rhetoric. We shall see from a comparison of Odysseus' speech to passages in the Homeric corpus in which roots are explicitly described that both Odysseus and the narrator mention roots when they want to make a tree especially strong. By declaring that he has performed a feat of

⁷ For a general discussion of the importance of symbol in Homer prefacing a close reading of the bedpost, see Zeitlin (1996: 19-20).

⁸ Cf. Foley (1978: 17): "In the simile of the shipwrecked sailor Penelope takes on the mature Odysseus' experiences as her own."

carpentry upon so hardy a tree, Odysseus identifies himself as a preeminent craftsman and a hero superior to his rivals.

Let us quote the speech in full so that we will be better able to see its distinctive features (*Od.* 23:181-204):

<i>“Ὡς ἄρ’ ἔφη πόσιος πειρωμένη· αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς ὀχθήσας ἄλοχον προσεφώνεε κεδνὰ ἰδυίαν· ὦ γύναι, ἥ μάλα τοῦτο ἔπος θυμαλγὲς ἔειπες. τίς δέ μοι ἄλλοσε θῆκε λέχος; χαλεπὸν δέ κεν εἴη καὶ μάλ’ ἐπισταμένῳ, ὅτε μὴ θεὸς αὐτὸς ἐπελθὼν ῥηϊδίως ἐθέλων θείῃ ἄλλῃ ἐνὶ χώρῃ. ἀνδρῶν δ’ οὐ κέν τις ζῶς βροτός, οὐδὲ μάλ’ ἡβῶν, ῥεία μετοχλίσσειεν, ἐπεὶ μέγα σῆμα τέτυκται ἐν λεχεὶ ἀσκητῶ· τὸ δ’ ἐγὼ κάμον οὐδέ τις ἄλλος. θάμνος ἔφυ τανύφυλλος ἐλαίης ἔρκεος ἐντός, ἀκμηνὸς θαλέθων· πάχετος δ’ ἦν ἡὔτε κίων. τῷ δ’ ἐγὼ ἀμφιβαλὼν θάλαμον δέμον, ὄφρ’ ἐτέλεσσα, πυκνῆσιν λιθάδεσσι, καὶ εὖ καθύπερθεν ἔρεψα, κολλητὰς δ’ ἐπέθηκα θύρας, πυκινῶς ἀραρυίας. καὶ τότε ἔπειτ’ ἀπέκοψα κόμην τανυφύλλου ἐλαίης, κορμόν δ’ ἐκ ρίζης προταμὼν ἀμφέξεσα χαλκῷ εὖ καὶ ἐπισταμένως, καὶ ἐπὶ στάθμην ἴθυνα, ἐρμῖν’ ἀσκήσας, τέτρηνα δὲ πάντα τερέτρω. ἐκ δὲ τοῦ ἀρχόμενος λέχος ἔξεον, ὄφρ’ ἐτέλεσσα, δαιδάλλων χρυσῷ τε καὶ ἀργύρῳ ἧδ’ ἐλέφαντι· ἐν δ’ ἐτάνυσσ’ ἱμάντα βοὸς φοίνικι φαεινόν, οὕτω τοι τόδε σῆμα πιφαύσκομαι· οὐδέ τι οἶδα, ἥ μοι ἔτ’ ἐμπεδόν ἐστι, γύναι, λέχος, ἥέ τις ἦδη ἀνδρῶν ἄλλοσε θῆκε, ταμῶν ὑποπυθμέν’ ἐλαίης.</i>	185 190 195 200
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So she spoke, as a test of her husband; then Odysseus, deeply troubled, addressed his devoted wife:
“O my wife, that speech you spoke pained my heart.
Who moved my bed to a different place? If would be difficult even for one very skilled, unless a god himself, coming in, willingly put it easily in another place.
No other living mortal among men, not even one in the very prime of his life, could have easily moved it, since there is a great sign in the fashioned bed; I, and no one else, made it.
There grew a young tree of olive with long leaves outside the courtyard, flourishing in its prime; and it was sturdy like a column.
And I built the bedroom by surrounding it with closely-placed stones until I finished it and I roofed it from above, and I added fashioned doors, well-fitted.
And then I cut off the head of the tapering-leaved olive-tree, and I smoothed it with bronze, cutting around the base from the root well and skillfully, and I straightened the chalkline, fashioning the bedpost, all perforated with a borer.

And beginning from there I smoothed out the bed, until I finished it,
adorning it with gold and silver and ivory;
and I stretched out a strap of leather, bright with dye.
And I display this as a sign to you thus; nor do I know well
whether the bed is exactly as it was, wife, or whether
someone has already moved it elsewhere, cutting the base of the olive tree.

This is a deliberately crafted speech of triumphant self-praise. Bristling at Penelope's suggestion that their marriage-bed is moveable, Odysseus launches into a play-by-play account of how he constructed their house. The catalogue of details from 192-201 builds a solid case that Odysseus can have no rivals as carpenter and husband. This catalogue is ringed by ὄφρ' ἐτέλεσσα (192, 201), a phrase that expresses the thoroughness of Odysseus' workmanship. The closely-placed stones (πυκνῆσιν λιθάδεσσι, 193) and well-fitted doors (θύρας, πυκινῶς ἀραρυίας, 194) and sturdy roof (εὖ καθύπερθεν ἔρεψα, 193) offer no space for an interloper to squeeze through and, once inside, corrupt Penelope and undo what the hero has so carefully constructed.

The poet blends the hero's assertiveness with hints of humor that contribute, ultimately, to the joyous celebration of Odysseus' triumphant return and establish that the relationship between Odysseus and Penelope is, ultimately, pleasant and affectionate. The humor arises from the fact that Odysseus overreacts to Penelope's teasing. When I say "overreact" I do not mean to suggest that the stakes are low or that the scene does not deal with serious themes. I mean that Odysseus, uncharacteristically, misjudges the situation. Penelope throws Odysseus off balance and his struggle to regain control from his wife is amusingly incongruous.

The narrator creates this incongruity in 23.182: ὀχθήσας ἄλοχον προσεφώνεε κεδνὰ ἰδυίαν. The poet cleverly juxtaposes Odysseus' hot temper (ὀχθήσας) with Penelope's true but concealed devotion (κεδνὰ ἰδυίαν), as if to make the narrator suggest, knowingly, to the audience that the deep concern expressed by ὀχθήσας and the long and detailed speech that follow are

ultimately unnecessary since Penelope has been faithful all along.⁹ To accentuate the humor, the narrator uses *ὀχθήσας* in an unusual way. To judge by its use in Homeric deliberation formulas, *ὀχθήσας* is regularly a strong word, used when a hero faces a life-or-death crisis on the battlefield. In such dire straits, the hero feels “a momentary weakening, or questioning of heroic temper” as he debates with himself whether to risk his life or to retreat ingloriously and face the criticism of his fellow soldiers.¹⁰ Now, Odysseus may feel threatened in his heroism, or rather, in his manhood, unable to bear the thought that someone else could occupy his marriage bed. Yet his situation in Book 23 is not *life*-threatening. Indeed, Odysseus has just vanquished the suitors in Book 22 and so has cleared all danger.¹¹ The humor in Odysseus and Penelope’s reunion is consistent with the notes of tenderness struck in Odysseus’ speech to Nausicaa in Book 6 and a lasting confirmation of the theme of *homophrosyne* eulogized there.

⁹ Scholarly opinion on the emotional coloring of *ὀχθήσας* here runs the gamut between exasperation and rage. de Jong (2001: *ad* 183-204) calls it “Odysseus’ angry speech.” Cf. Amory (1963: 119): “He inquires angrily.” Clarke (1967: 78 “Odysseus goes into a rage”) and Felson-Rubin (1994: 38 “Odysseus’s initial rage...gives way to relief.”) perceive even stronger reactions. Heubeck comes closer (1992: 333 *ad* 182-204) because he sees Odysseus’ reaction as a mixture of anger and bewilderment: “In his anger (*ὀχθήσας*, 182) Odysseus cannot imagine how the bed he made could have been moved; he gives vent to his perplexity in a detailed description of the bed’s design and construction.” Rutherford (2009 [1986]: 183) describes the speech as “his moment of angry passion, of uncontrolled emotion.” Yet I am inclined to side with those who interpret the words more mildly, like Thornton (1970: 50): “Odysseus replies with much agitation” and Schadewaldt (1966 [1959]: 17): “betroffen [taken aback].” Cf. Schadewaldt’s influential metaphor of the “tennis match” [Ballspiel] (16-19) between Odysseus and Penelope, which perceptively captures the essential equality of the reunited couple and the playful humor of the scene as a whole.

¹⁰ The quote is Scully’s (1984: 15). Curiously, he confines his discussion to the use of *ὀχθέω* in deliberation formulas, and makes no comment whatever about the meaning or application of the word to this passage in the *Odyssey*.

¹¹ If we are to imagine, with Katz (1991: 155-191) that the sinister figure of Clytemnestra lurks behind the reunion scene in Book 23, we may suppose that Penelope could fell Odysseus in his moment of triumphant return, as Clytemnestra did Agamemnon. Yet Odysseus has survived his bath (the fatal moment for Agamemnon), and so has nothing more to worry about.

As already noted, Odysseus' main purposes are to declare his identity and to assert his superiority over his rivals. He defines his identity, not by saying "I am Odysseus," as he does to the Phaeacians when he begins the *Apologoi*: εἴμ' Ὀδυσσεὺς Λαερτιάδης, ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν / ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καί μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει. "I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, who am known to all men for my tricks, and my reputation reaches the sky." (*Od.* 9.19-20), but by declaring, "I made this."¹² In this speech Odysseus defines himself as a craftsman, building on the themes expressed in his own person in the *Apologoi*, chiefly, as we will see in our first section below, in his story of triumphing over the Cyclops by turning his adversary's olive-wood walking stick into a weapon).¹³

Odysseus' strategy for negating the threatening power of interlopers involves an interesting piece of rhetoric whereby Odysseus draws a contrast between a hypothetical rival (τίς δέ μοι ἄλλοσε θῆκε λέχος, 23.184; ἀνδρῶν δ' οὐ κέν τις ζῶος βροτός, 23.187), whose strength peaks only for a moment (οὐδὲ μάλ' ἡβῶν, 23.187), and the tree which retains the same strength for many years (ἀκμηνὸς θαλέθων, 23.191). According to Odysseus' metaphor, the rival attempts to cut the tree (ταμὼν ὑπο πυθμέν' ἐλαίης, 204), a situation that would remind an audience familiar with the typical motifs of Iliadic poetry of the typical scenes in the *Iliad*'s

¹² Starobinski (1975: 349) and Katz (1991: 178) call attention to the difference between saying "I am Odysseus" and "I built the bed." Bergren (2008 [1995]) pithily expresses the poetic impact of this choice: "Odysseus emphasizes his unique architectural authorship" (230). Cf. Holmberg (1995: 119): "Odysseus' narrative vividly describes (rather than implies, as Penelope's does) his own active construction of their marriage bed, which forms the literal basis of their relationship as married husband and wife and which functions metonymically as an expression of the male role as creator and guarantor of culture and meaning."

¹³ The narrator, too, acknowledges Odysseus' superiority at craftsmanship. On Odysseus' resourcefulness and on the way he uses trees and plants to his advantage, see Ch. 4 notes 9 and 11 above.

battle narrative when a victorious warrior is compared to a successful woodsman.¹⁴ In significant contrast to the Iliadic patterns we described in Ch. 2, according to which fallen trees representing Trojans enhance the excellence of the victorious Achaeans, however, Odysseus presents his hypothetical rival's failed tree cutting. Odysseus expects that the sturdy trunk (*πυθμέν'*) will withstand the feeble efforts of his rival.¹⁵ This interloper lacks the skill (*καὶ μάλ' ἐπισταμένω*, 185) and strength (*οὐδὲ μάλ' ἥβων*, 187) to cut the tree, and this rival's failure magnifies the excellence of Odysseus' carpentry and proclaims that Odysseus remains the rightful ruler of Ithaca. We shall argue in the second section of this chapter that the critical difference in Odysseus' olive—what signals its preeminent hardiness—is its root system, explicitly mentioned at 23.196: *ἐκ ῥίζης προταμών*. Our focus on Odysseus' bedpost invites us to look into the poetic resonances of roots in the Homeric corpus. Furthermore, roots appear fairly infrequently in the *Iliad* because the poet of the *Iliad* likes to use the motif of tree-destruction to celebrate the remarkable martial achievements of the battling heroes.¹⁶ Yet rooted trees prove to be almost impossible for any but the greatest heroes at the peak of the battle fury to destroy. So rooted trees prove an especially stern test for the excellence of a fighting hero. For Odysseus then, contriving such an impossible test proves to be the perfect means to declare his identity and his superiority over his rivals. So when Odysseus includes roots in the description of his house, he suggests above all that his house is absolutely impermeable to

¹⁴ Victorious Achaeans are likened to woodcutters in four individual duels: Ajax vs. Simoesius (4.485-486), Ajax vs. Imbrius (13.177-181), Idomeneus vs. Asius (13.389-393), and Patroclus vs. Sarpedon (16.481-486).

¹⁵ *πυθμήν* does not appear in the *Iliad*'s tree similes because the *Iliad* poet designs these trees that are destined to fall at the hands of craftsmen that stand for victorious Achaeans to be fragile. Odysseus, by contrast uses this word to lend hardiness to olive that anchors his household.

¹⁶ On the distinctiveness of this, see my discussion above at the beginning of Ch. 4 (pp. 118-119).

interlopers. Because the roots of the tree still live, the bedpost retains the more-than-mortal natural strength of a hardy tree. His incredulity at a possible breech is also unsurprising once we appreciate the significance of roots in Homer, especially in the *Iliad*'s battle narrative.

Odysseus' speech in *Odyssey* 23 bears affinities with Achilles' oath on Agamemnon's scepter in Book 1 of the *Iliad* (as we analyzed in Chapter 2) in that both characters manipulate the traditional Homeric motif of tree cutting. Yet the messages of the speeches turn out diametrically opposite to each other. While Achilles uses tree-felling imagery to undercut Agamemnon's royal authority, Odysseus uses the same imagery to affirm and recapture his royal authority over his own house. To close this chapter we shall show how Homer's attitude toward craftsmanship is profoundly ambivalent in a way that mirrors the ambiguities of heroism in the poems. The *Iliad* presents craftsmanship, problematically, as an act of destruction (in that it kills a living thing), which allows room for Achilles to argue that a wooden object of culture, like the scepter, is dead since it has been severed from the living tree. In arguing this Achilles seeks to criticize Agamemnon by challenging the tenets of the heroic code. By contrast, Odysseus presents in his speech a different, less ambiguous model where he, the master carpenter, solves the problem by performing a constructive feat of carpentry that preserves the natural energy of the living olive tree.¹⁷

ODYSSEUS THE CRAFTSMAN

The affinities between Odysseus and Hephaestus have been noted in scholarship on his character, particularly in connection to thematic links between Demodocus' song of Ares and

¹⁷ Odysseus' completely constructive carpentry more closely resembles the creation of Hesiod's scepter at the beginning of the *Theogony* (see above, Ch. 4 pp. 117-119) than the craftsmanship of the *Iliad*. But the *Theogony* differs from the *Odyssey* because the Muses do not craft the scepter as Odysseus does actually craft his bed. Rather, the Muses pluck the scepter directly from the laurel tree, a completely natural process.

Aphrodite and the main narrative.¹⁸ More generally, Austin (1975: 179) opens his substantial chapter on the story and themes of the *Odyssey* with the persuasive claim that the whole poem focuses on and celebrates technical skill: “The poem looks first at the evidence of man's mind at work on the external environment. Man must know how to navigate by the stars, how to build a ship or beach it, how to arrange a sacrifice, transform wood into furniture, wool into garments.” Similarly, Beye (1968: 171-172), in a perceptive discussion of Nestor in the *Odyssey*, describes the importance of following technical protocol in the mutable and dangerous world of the poem: “Those who are wise build a bulwark against this [uncertainty] in order, precision, and technical skill. Otherwise the personality, one's identity, will be lost in the contrary shifts of events.” The resourcefulness and tenacity of Odysseus is glorified even more than Nestor since the Ithacan is the preeminent craftsman.¹⁹

Apart from the speech in Book 23 which we are analyzing here, Odysseus' resourcefulness through craftsmanship is best displayed in his battle with the Cyclops. Odysseus shows a coolness under pressure, quick thinking, and expert technical skill to extricate himself from this dire predicament, traits which emerge again when Odysseus convinces Penelope of his identity in Book 23. Upon the narrative of the confrontation between man and monster we can perceive an allegorical dimension in the story whereby Odysseus represents culture and

¹⁸ These links have been surveyed most closely by Newton (1987). Zeitlin (1996: 34-42) and Holmberg (2003: 6-8) note their relevance to the story of Odysseus' crafting of his bed. Cf. Buchan (2004: 227-229).

¹⁹ Beye (1968: 165) quite nicely conveys this quality of Odysseus' heroism in his definition and discussion of the epithet *πολύτροπος* (*Od.* 1.1): “The epithet *polytropos* that I have translated here ‘of many turns’ has more meaning than a simple phrase can indicate. It implies someone who can agilely change his course when cornered, or who has the imagination to proceed in new directions, that is, a man of several personalities.”

Polyphemus embodies nature.²⁰ We first see the play of nature and culture in the Cyclopeia in the hero's digression about Goat Island, where Odysseus keeps some of his ships and men before he ventures to Polyphemus' cave. Odysseus' mind is turned toward civilization when he appraises the undeveloped Goat Island for the Phaeacians and imagines a thriving trading colony and a busy harbor there (9.131-141). The point of the lengthy excursus on Goat Island has been productively surveyed by Byre (1994). Byre is certainly right to stress how much light Odysseus' description of Goat Island sheds on the hero's character.²¹ I wish, however, to take this general insight in a different direction. While Byre suggests that Odysseus attempts to flatter his hosts on Scheria with the description, I suggest that Odysseus uses the digression to give his audience a foretaste of the inquisitive and imaginative resourcefulness that he draws on to defeat the Cyclops later in the episode.²²

When Odysseus catches a glimpse of the Cyclops, he compares him to a wooded lonely peak (9.190-192):

καὶ γὰρ θαῦμ' ἐτέτυκτο πελώριον, οὐδὲ ἑώκει
 ἀνδρὶ γε σιτοφάγῳ, ἀλλὰ ῥίῳ ὑλήεντι
 ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων, ὃ τε φαίνεται οἶον ἀπ' ἄλλων.

²⁰ On the conflict between nature and culture in the episode see de Jong (2001: 231-232 *ad* 9.106-566 and 243 *ad* 9.375-97. de Jong (2001: 244 *ad* 9.396-417) also notes in her discussion of Odysseus' Οὔτις/μῆτις trick how the Cyclops episode stages a conflict between cunning (μῆτις) and force (βίη). Odysseus' self presentation as a woodcutter brings these two themes together (cf. Nestor's advice to Antilochus that a woodcutter needs more μῆτις than βίη (*Il.* 23.315: μῆτι τοι δρυτόμος μέγ' ἀμείνων ἢ βίηφι).

²¹ Byre (1994: 361): "I suggest that the primary purpose of the description is not to characterize the Cyclopes, but rather to characterize Odysseus."

²² Byre (1994) suggests that Odysseus presents himself as a colonist to make himself appear more focused on his homecoming to the Phaeacians, who will then be more likely to give him an escort home, since securing this escort is the whole point of the *Apologoi*, according to Glenn Most (1989). Clay (1980) even argues that Goat Island was the former habitation of the Phaeacians themselves, and includes a survey of earlier scholarship in her fourth footnote that more directly brings out the themes of colonization voiced here.

For he was indeed a monstrous wonder, nor was he
like a man who eats food, but like the wooded peak
of lofty mountains, which appears alone away from others.

Odysseus' first impression of the Cyclops is particularly important in his story. By likening Polyphemus to a forested mountain, not only does he show that the Cyclops is a great-sized brute, but he further hints that he is an anti-social monster to the hyper-cultural Phaeacians.²³ Further still, the description implies that to an enterprising culture-hero like Odysseus, overcoming the Cyclops promises rewards. Just as the timber awaits a woodcutter after an arduous climb, so too can Odysseus win plunder if he can negotiate the physical and mental obstacles presented in the person of the Cyclops. In other words, Odysseus presents Polyphemus as a challenge to himself and his men, a challenge that he is willing to undertake despite the cautions voiced by his rather less adventurous and less heroic crew (9.224-330).²⁴ Here Odysseus also divulges Polyphemus' critical weakness, his lack of sociability, of culture. Odysseus here foreshadows that the monster's friends will let him down in his moment of need. Incidentally, all these details serve the goal of the *Apologoi* as a whole: they present Odysseus as a man of culture whom the like-minded Phaeacians ought to help and they show the Cyclops as a lout who deserves the punishment Odysseus metes out to him.

The nature and culture theme of Odysseus' story comes to the fore at the moment when Odysseus decides to blind his captor. To do this requires the same kind of imaginative vision that Odysseus displays when sailing past Goat Island and the technical skill required to build his

²³ For the view that the Phaeacians represent culture at its most refined, see especially Segal (1962: 33-35), Vidal-Naquet (1996 [1970]), and Redfield (1983: 244).

²⁴ That Odysseus turns out to regret his decision to await the return of Polyphemus, as he tells the Phaeacians (ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην, ἦ τ' ἂν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν "But I was not persuaded, and it would have been much better [if I had been]" (228) does not make Odysseus' decision any less heroic.

bedroom. He must first imagine that the Cyclops' staff could be a weapon and then has to lead his companions, delegating tasks, if the plan is to be successful (9.318-321; 325-333):

ἦδε δέ μοι κατὰ θυμὸν ἀρίστη φαίνεται βουλή.
Κύκλωπος γὰρ ἔκειτο μέγα ῥόπαλον παρὰ σηκῷ,
χλωρὸν ἐλαΐνεον· τὸ μὲν ἔκταμεν, ὅφρα φοροίῃ
αὐανθέν.

...
τοῦ μὲν ὅσον τ' ὄργυιαν ἐγὼν ἀπέκοψα παραστάς,
καὶ παρέθηχ' ἐτάροισιν, ἀποξῦναι δ' ἐκέλευσα·
οἱ δ' ὁμαλὸν ποίησαν· ἐγὼ δ' ἐθώωσα παραστάς
ἄκρον, ἄφαρ δὲ λαβὼν ἐπυράκτεον ἐν πυρὶ κηλέῳ.
καὶ τὸ μὲν εὖ κατέθηκα κατακρύψας ὑπὸ κόπρῳ,
ἣ ῥα κατὰ σπείους κέχυτο μεγάλ' ἤλιθα πολλή·
αὐτὰρ τοὺς ἄλλους κλήρῳ πεπαλάσθαι ἄνωγον,
ὅς τις τολμήσειεν ἐμοὶ σὺν μοχλὸν αἰείρας
τρίψαι ἐν ὀφθαλμῷ, ὅτε τὸν γλυκὺς ὕπνος ἰκάνοι.

And this plan appeared to be best to me.
For the great staff of the Cyclops was lying by the pen,
of green olive wood; this he cut in order to carry it
when it was dried.

...
I, standing close, cut off as much as a fathom from it,
and set it out for my companions, and bid them to smooth it.
And they made it smooth; and I, standing close, brought it
to a sharp point, and right away I made it glow in the blazing fire.
And, hiding it under manure, I laid it carefully,
manure which was spread in very great abundance throughout the cave.
Then I ordered the others to draw by lot
who would dare to lift the stake with me and twist it
in his eye, when sweet sleep reached him.

Although Odysseus has seen his companions devoured by the monster and desperately grieves the loss, he nevertheless refrains from enjoying the instant gratification of exacting vengeance there and then upon the Cyclops because he realizes in the nick of time that they would never be able to escape the cave unless the Cyclops removes the boulder from the entrance (9.299-306). And so, Odysseus takes his time, secretly plotting dark thoughts as he does later with the suitors at the beginning of Book 20 (5-24).²⁵ And he finds even in the lonely cave something familiar, a

²⁵ For Odysseus' action here as an example of his distinctive brand of "passive heroism," see Cook (2009 [1999]: 118-119).

rude piece of olive wood that he envisions as a weapon, and, to underscore the culture-theme, as a ship's mast (a further detail that is designed to endear Odysseus to the Phaeacians).²⁶ While the Cyclops waits for nature to dry the olive club, and in the meantime it remains useless to him, Odysseus uses the tool of fire to accelerate the drying process to turn the natural object into an object of culture which Odysseus turns to his own advantage.²⁷ His quick thinking and aggressiveness with Polyphemus' green would-be staff in the name of Zeus Xenios (ἐπεὶ ξείνους οὐκ ἄξιο σῶ ἐνὶ οἰκῶ / ἐσθέμεναι· τῶ σε Ζεὺς τίσατο καὶ θεοὶ ἄλλοι "You [Polyphemus] did not refrain from eating guests in your house; / for that Zeus and the other gods have punished you," *Od.* 9.478-479) recall his violence with Agamemnon's scepter in *Il.* 2 against the transgressive Thersites and Achilles' oath in *Il.* 1 that Agamemnon will pay for his mistreatment of Achilles (ὅ τ' ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισας, 1.244). As Odysseus does with the bedpost, he cuts away at (ὄργυιαν ἐγὼν ἀπέκοψα: 9.325 ≈ ἀπέκοψα κόμην ταυρυφύλλου ἐλαίης: 23.195) and smoothes the stake (ἀποξύναι, 9.326 ≈ ἀμφέξεσα, 23.196). Importantly, Odysseus lacks the strength to wield the olive stake himself but because he is socially astute, he establishes a drawing of lots to select the men who will help him to execute his plan. This reliance on social

²⁶ That the olive is closely connected with Odysseus' patron goddess Athena goes without saying. In *the Odyssey*, the link is made especially in Book 13, where Athena and Odysseus plot the strategy for his entrance to Ithaca under an olive tree. Cf. *Od.* 13.102-104, 122-124, 344-351, 372-373. On the olive tree as a symbol of culture in the *Odyssey*, cf. Clarke (1967: 78-79), Vidal-Naquet (1996 [1970]: 40), and Bonnafé (1985). On the olive-tree as an exemplar of the folkloric Tree of Life, which possesses powers of healing and rejuvenation (as at the end of Book 5 when Odysseus sleeps his restorative sleep on Phaeacia), see Dietz (1971).

²⁷ This passage shares the detail of wood drying out with the poplar simile to which Simoesius is compared when Ajax kills him at *Il.* 4.482-487: ἡ μὲν τ' ἀζομένη κέεται ποταμοῖο παρ' ὄχθας "[the poplar] lies on the banks of the river drying." This detail of the drying olive staff may even signal the death of the Cyclops as it does for Simoesius. Page (1955: 9-13) sees the olive-wood stake as a late innovation in the poem which the poet struggles to reconcile with the folktale origins of the story. Yet the olive stake serves to illustrate Odysseus' *metis* and preeminence at craftsmanship. A metal spit (which Page asserts was the original weapon) would not evoke these themes which are so important for defining Odysseus' character.

organization demonstrates Odysseus' advantages in cunning over the Cyclops, whose deficits in this area have already been implied with the introductory image of Polyphemus as a lonely mountain.

The blinding itself is anchored by two technical similes that proclaim Odysseus' identity as a superior craftsman (9.382-397):

οἱ μὲν μοχλὸν ἐλόντες ἐλαΐνον, ὃξ' ὅν' ἐπ' ἄκρῳ,
ὀφθαλμῷ ἐνέρεισαν· ἐγὼ δ' ἐφύπερθεν ἐρεισθεὶς
δίνεον, ὥς ὅτε τις τρυπῶ δόρυ νηΐου ἀνὴρ
τρυπάνῳ, οἱ δέ τ' ἐνερθεν ὑποσσείουσιν ἱμάντι
ἀψάμενοι ἐκάτερθε, τὸ δὲ τρέχει ἐμμενὲς αἰεὶ·
ὥς τοῦ ἐν ὀφθαλμῷ πυριήκεα μοχλὸν ἐλόντες
δινέομεν, τὸν δ' αἷμα περίρρεε θερμὸν ἔοντα.
πάντα δέ οἱ βλέφαρ' ἀμφὶ καὶ ὀφρύας εὖσεν αὐτμῇ
γλήνης καιομένης· σφαραγεῦντο δέ οἱ πυρὶ ῥίζαι.
ὥς δ' ὅτ' ἀνὴρ χαλκεὺς πέλεκυν μέγαν ἤε σκέπαρνον
εἰν ὕδατι ψυχρῷ βάπτῃ μεγάλα ἰαχοντα
φαρμάσσων· τὸ γὰρ αὐτὲ σιδήρου γε κράτος ἐστίν·
ὥς τοῦ σίξ' ὀφθαλμὸς ἐλαΐνέω περὶ μοχλῷ.
σμερδαλέον δέ μέγ' ὤμωξεν, περὶ δ' ἴαχε πέτρῃ,
ἡμεῖς δὲ δείσαντες ἀπессύμεθ'. αὐτὰρ ὁ μοχλὸν
ἐξέρυσ' ὀφθαλμοῖο πεφυρμένον αἵματι πολλῷ.

And they, taking hold of the olive-wood stake, sharpened to a point,
thrust it in his eye; and I, leaning in from above,
twisted it, as when someone drills a ship plank
with a drill, and from below they, grasping it with a strap,
spin it, and it runs always continuously:
in this way we, taking hold of the stake sharpened by fire, whirled it
in his eye, and blood flowed over the stake which was hot.
And the blast of the burning pupil singed his brows and eyelid;
and the roots were hissing with fire.
And just as when a bronze-worker dips a great axe or adze
in cold water, the metal sounding loudly
to temper it; for it then has the strength of iron:
in this way his eye sizzled around the olive wood stake.
And he cried very loudly, and the rock resounded around,
and we rushed back, afraid. Then he drew the stake,
stained with blood, from his eye.

The technical imagery in this passage illustrates Odysseus' superiority over the monster. The first simile, like the other ship-building imagery, is present to appeal to the ship-loving Phaeacians and to develop further the colonizing theme first articulated in Odysseus' story with

the digression on Goat Island. The second simile connects in a more direct way to Odysseus' character, as though the axe which the craftsman tempers represents Odysseus' own mind. Indeed, it is Odysseus who is tempered and hardened by his experience with the Cyclops (which again prepares him for the bow contest with the suitors where he will again have to demonstrate mastery over axes). Odysseus' state of mind changes from a soft and painful outpouring of grief for his companions and helpless anger (*ἀμηχανίη δ' ἔχε θυμόν*, 9.295) to a steely resolve, which will serve him well against the suitors on Ithaca.²⁸ The image of a courageous mind as a sharp woodcutting axe is further paralleled in the *Iliad* (3.60-63) where Paris likens Hector's persistent resolve in the battle lines to an axe blade. The skill Odysseus celebrates in this simile foreshadows his revelation as a superior craftsman in Book 23.

We may bring this discussion of Odysseus the craftsman to a close by examining the interesting phrase *σφαραγεῦντο δέ οἱ πυρὶ ῥίζαι* in the passage above. Because this metaphorical use of *ῥίζαι* is unparalleled in the Homeric corpus, it becomes all the more important to look into why Odysseus employs so bold a figure of speech.²⁹ Homer's metaphor "the roots of the eye" recalls the first passage we discussed in which Odysseus likens the Cyclops to a lonely wooded peak. With this phrase Odysseus finally signals that he has met the challenge of felling the mighty Cyclops just as a woodcutter fells a mighty tree. Yet, to anticipate our findings in the next section of this chapter, because rooted trees hardly ever fall in the *Iliad*, Odysseus' blinding

²⁸ On connections between Polyphemus and the suitors, see Watkins (1995). 402-405. On how the tales of the wanderings lay out an ethical template for the violent events on Ithaca, see Nagler (1990).

²⁹ The phrase "root[s] of the eye" appears in later medical writers like Soranus (*Gynecology* 3.8.3), Galen (*de Ossibus ad tirones* II p. 748; *de Nervorum dissectione*, II p. 832; *de Usu Partium* III p. 639, III p. 798, III p. 831; *de Locis Affectis* VIII p. 205; *de Simplicium Medicamentorum Temperamentis ac Facultatibus* XI p. 831, XII p. 187; *de Compositione Medicamentorum Secundum Locos* XII, p. 562, p. 563), and Oribasius *Eclogae Medicamentorum* (142.2).

of Polyphemos looks even more impressive than the achievements of Iliadic heroes at Troy. The metaphor illustrates Odysseus' complete victory over the giant and codes it as a victory of culture over nature. Just as Odysseus trims his olive-wood bedpost from roots to top (ἐκ ῥίζης προταμών, 23.196)—an action that points up the thoroughness of his craftsmanship—so too does Odysseus utterly subdue the Cyclops.³⁰

THE PECULIAR HARDINESS OF ROOTS

A survey of the mentions of roots by the narrator in the Homeric corpus reveals that they, more than any other element, make trees resistant to mortal efforts to destroy them. As we will see Odysseus uses roots in the same way because he too mentions the roots of his olive bed to show its toughness. We can demonstrate this by building on our conclusions from Chapter 2 about the narrative patterns that govern the use of tree similes in the *Iliad*'s battle narrative. In Chapter 2, we showed that tree similes in the battle narrative illustrate the superior martial prowess of the Achaeans over the formidable Trojans by casting the victorious Achaeans as supremely capable and dogged carpenters. In our analysis in Chapter 2, we showed that trees, while they are almost always able to withstand storms and wind, always fall when faced with a

³⁰ de Jong (2001: 243) raises an important issue in her discussion *ad loc*, the question of whether the audience is meant to feel pathos at the moment of Polyphemos' blinding. de Jong reads the scene as "ambivalent." She notes that we are to admire Odysseus' skill, but at the same time feel troubled at the gruesome details of the blinding. These details "draw attention to the cruelty of Odysseus' deed: whereas the craftsmen deal with lifeless material, his [i.e. Odysseus'] object is a human being." de Jong draws her note from Newton's article (1983) about pathos in the Cyclopeia. In his reading of the blinding, Newton perceptively observes the stress on the thoroughness of Odysseus' victory (138), but goes on to claim that the themes of productiveness in the two technological similes are juxtaposed with the violence against Polyphemos (citing Porter, 1972). To be sure, the details are vivid, but no more vivid than the image of the dead puppy which Odysseus uses to impress the Cyclops' brutality against Odysseus' companions on his audience (9.289). All in all, the pathetic reading does not make sense here: Polyphemos is no Hector, so the extension of Porter's argument about the *Iliad* to this battle against a savage monster is unwarranted. Nor does making the Cyclops a sympathetic character further the goals of Odysseus' speech.

determined carpenter, and on the whole, appeared fragile because they were constantly being destroyed. Here, we shall refine this picture by studying those hardiest of trees whose roots allow them to survive the onslaught of the forces of men and nature.

Of the nine individual duels we studied in Chapter 2 in which the poet likens the combatants to trees (Simoesius: 4.473-489; Krethon and Orsilochus, 5.560; Polypoites and Leonteus, 12.131-136; Imbrius, 13.177-181; Asius, 13.389-393; Alkathous, 13.434-440; Hector, 14.414-420; Sarpedon: 16.481-486; and Euphorbus, 17.51-60) in only two (Polypoites and Leonteus and Hector) are roots mentioned. We shall see that the inclusion of roots correlates with the outcome of the fight. In neither case in which roots appear does the warrior compared to the rooted tree die.

We see the hardness of rooted trees most clearly at *Il.* 12.131-136, where Polypoites and Leonteus stand against the Trojan Asius like oaks enduring against windstorms (12.131-136):³¹

τὼ μὲν ἄρα προπάροιθε πυλάων ὑψηλάων
ἔστασαν ὡς ὅτε τε δρύες οὔρεσιν ὑψικάρηνοι,
αἳ τ' ἄνεμον μίμνουσι καὶ ὑετὸν ἥματα πάντα,
ρίζησιν μέγαλῃσι διηνεκέεσσ' ἀραρυῖαι·
ὥς ἄρα τῷ χεῖρεσσι πεποιθότες ἠδὲ βίηφιν
μίμνον ἐπερχόμενον μέγαν Ἄσιον, οὐδὲ φέβοντο.

[Polypoites and Leonteus] stood in front of the lofty gates
just as lofty-headed oaks in the mountains,
which withstand the wind and rain every day,
fitted with great, far-reaching roots:
in this way did they, trusting in their hands and strength,
withstood, and did not flee from great Asius who was rushing on.

We noted in Ch. 2 the bias that leads the poet to liken Trojans attacking Achaeans to storms and not to woodcutters, who more consistently fell the trees that stand for their opponents. Asius, as a Trojan, lacks the power to kill the steadfast Achaeans Polypoites and Leonteus and so he is pictured as merely a windstorm and not as a heroic craftsman. Yet the strength of the Achaeans

³¹ For the unusualness of this image in the *Iliad*, and its possible Indo-European provenance, see above Ch. 1, p. 8.

is further guaranteed by the conspicuous inclusion of roots that keep these trees fixed in place and signal that the warriors will survive.³² The further moral, then, building on our conclusions from Chapter 2, is, then, that in individual duels, warriors compared to rooted trees do not die.

The simile describing Ajax's wounding of Hector is more unusual. Even though Hector falls under the attack of Ajax, he does not perish in the encounter (*Il.* 14.414-420):

ὥς δ' ὅθ' ὑπὸ πληγῆς πατρὸς Διὸς ἐξερίπηι δρῦς
 πρόρριζος, δεινὴ δὲ θεοῖου γίγνεται ὁδμή
 ἐξ αὐτῆς, τὸν δ' οὐ περ ἔχει θράσος ὅς κεν ἴδῃται
 ἐγγὺς ἔων—χαλεπὸς δὲ Διὸς μέγαλοιό κεραυνός—
 ὥς ἔπεσ' Ἑκτορος ὦκα χαμαὶ μένος ἐν κονίῃσιν·
 χεῖρὸς δ' ἔκβαλεν ἔγχος, ἐπ' αὐτῷ δ' ἀσπίς ἐάφθη
 ἰκαὶ κόρυς, ἀμφὶ δὲ οἱ βράχε τεύχεα ποικίλα χαλκῶι}.

And as when an oak falls because of the strike of Father Zeus
 roots and all, and the smell of sulphur is terrible
 from it, and whoever looks upon it loses courage
 who stands nearby, and the lightning of great Zeus is difficult:
 in this way the might of Hector fell swiftly to the ground in the dust;
 and he let go the spear from his hand, and upon him were thrust his shield
 and helm, and his armor decorated with bronze thundered about him.

The plot of course insists that Achilles, not Ajax, kills Hector, and on the most superficial level, the constraints of the plot dictate the narrator's deployment of traditional imagery. Given these constraints, however, it is still possible to detect subtler patterning of tree and weather imagery. Hector all but dies in this encounter with Ajax. Other details commonly associated with the death of a warrior are present—chiefly that Hector falls in the dust (438) and that his armor clatters around him (440). Janko (1994: 214-215 *ad* 14.414-17) notes details including the oak (the preeminently hardy tree, rooted or not) and the fearsome thunderstrike observed by wary onlookers, and the fact that the tree is utterly uprooted (*πρόρριζος*) that magnify the achievement of Ajax. Despite these details, most important is the outcome of the duel, which runs contrary to

³² Hainsworth (1993: 333 *ad* 12.134) calls the line “an impressive four-word verse” and further notes how this formula is “under-represented in the *Iliad*.”

expectation.³³ But the simile testifies to two important patterns in imagery: that lightning and bad weather are not as potent as they look and that a hero likened to a rooted tree never dies.

Given this habit of the narrator's, when Odysseus describes his olive bed, we can understand his surprise that some mortal may have been able to cut through and move the tree (*Od.* 23.184-185): *χαλεπὸν δέ κεν εἶη / καὶ μάλ' ἐπισταμένῳ* "It would be difficult, even for one very skilled." The fact that Odysseus has kept the tree rooted and alive makes it virtually indestructible for any but a god, a notion for which we have found confirmation in the Iliadic battle narrative. Just as Odysseus has built doors for his house that tightly seal it from the elements (23. 194: *κολλητὰς δ' ἐπέθηκα θύρας, πυκινῶς ἀραρυίας*), in a similar way do the roots to which Polypoites and Leonteus are compared protect the oaks from the storm: *ρίζησιν μεγάλησι διηνεκέεσσ' ἀραρυῖαι* (134). The hypothetical interloper that Odysseus envisions entering his bedchamber, therefore assumes the role of Asius, the unsuccessful challenger in Odysseus' triumphant narrative.

Outside of the individual duels, onslaughts against rooted trees illustrate that fighting is especially destructive. Significantly, mere mortals rarely reach such intensity in combat against each other. For example, the boar in Phoenix's story of Meleager rips orchards out with its tusks with a more than human might (*Il.* 9.538-542). The trees fall to the earth, roots and all: *πολλὰ δ' ὃ γε προθέλυμνα χαμαὶ βάλε δένδρεα μακρὰ / αὐτῇσιν ρίζησιν καὶ αὐτοῖς ἄνθεσι μήλων* (541-542). Human warriors hardly approach this degree of frenzy. Only the best fighters, Achilles and Agamemnon, only at the peak of their rage, can build up enough battle fury to destroy a rooted tree. Achilles, when he battles the river Scamander, certainly his boldest exploit, dams the raging river with an elm that had been rooted on the bank (*Il.* 21.242-246):

³³ Janko (1994) calls the simile an "ironic comparison" (213 *ad* 402-39) and say it "misleads us into thinking that Hektor is dead" (214-215 *ad* 414-17).

ὃ δὲ πτελέην ἔλε χερσίν
 εὐφυέα μεγάλην· ἥ δ' ἐκ ῥιζέων ἐριποῦσα
 κρημνὸν ἅπαντα διῶσεν, ἐπέσχε δὲ καλὰ ῥέεθρα
 ὅζοισιν πυκινοῖσι, γεφύρωσεν δὲ μιν αὐτὸν
 εἴσω πᾶσ' ἐριποῦσ'.

And Achilles grabbed an elm with his hands
 well-formed and big; and it, felled from the roots,
 tore apart the whole bank, and it restrained the lovely streams
 with its thick branches, and dammed it,
 entirely fallen within [the river].

This elm is certainly a formidable tree, as its epithets insist (εὐφυέα μεγάλην, 243), which enhances Achilles' martial achievement. This substantial elm is capable of blocking the flood of Scamander's fair waters (καλὰ ῥέεθρα, 243) with its thick branches (ὅζοισιν πυκινοῖσι, 245). That Achilles has the power to wrench this rooted tree from the bank demonstrates his power and fury, superior to all other warriors on the field, both Trojan and Achaean.

Furthermore, Agamemnon's *aristeia* in Book 11 is punctuated by a similar feat, although it is buried in a simile. Agamemnon puts the Trojans to flight at Book 11.155-162 and goes on a rampage that rivals Achilles' charge through Books 20-22:

ὥς δ' ὅτε πῦρ αἶδηλον ἐν ἀξύλῳ ἐμπέσῃ ὕλῃ,
 πάντῃ τ' εἰλυφόων ἄνεμος φέρει, οἱ δέ τε θάμνοι
 πρόρριζοι πίπτουσιν ἐπειγόμενοι πυρὸς ὀρμῇ·
 ὥς ἄρ' ὑπ' Ἀτρείδῃ Ἀγαμέμνονι πίπτε κάρηνα
 Τρώων φευγόντων, πολλοὶ δ' ἐριαύχενες ἵπποι
 κείν' ὄχρα κροτάλιζον ἀνὰ πτολέμοιο γεφύρας,
 ἡνιόχους ποθέοντες ἀμύνονας· οἱ δ' ἐπὶ γαίῃ
 κείατο, γύπεσσιν πολὺ φίλτεροι ἢ ἀλόχοισιν.

And just as when destructive fire falls upon a thickly wooded forest,
 and the wind, rolling it along, carries it everywhere, and the shrubs,
 assailed by the onrush of fire, fall, roots and all:
 in this way the heads of the fleeing Trojans fell at the hands of
 Atreus' son Agamemnon, and the many strong-necked horses
 rattled their chariots along the ramparts of war,
 longing for their excellent drivers; but the drivers lay dead
 upon the earth, much dearer to the vultures than to their wives.

Agamemnon's achievement may be diminished somewhat by the fact that his rampage eradicates only the roots of bushes (θάμνοι, 156) and not full-grown trees. Be that as it may, Agamemnon

certainly plays the hero in Book 11 in the absence of Achilles, and this passage certainly shows that he can fight as well as any warrior, Achilles (and Ajax, possibly) excepted. The reference to the dead chariot drivers in 162 proves to be interesting in light of the themes Odysseus evokes in *Odyssey* 23. It is certainly true that the *Iliad* presents battle and marriage as opposite choices for young heroes. The obituary for Iphidamas, one of Agamemnon's victims later in Book 11 dramatizes this choice at greater length (11.241-246):

ὥς δ' ὁ μὲν αὖθι πεσὼν κοιμήσατο χάλκεον ὕπνον,
οἰκτρός, ἀπὸ μνηστῆς ἀλόχου, ἀστοῖσιν ἀρηγῶν
κουριδίης, ἧς οὐ τι χάριν ἶδε, πολλὰ δ' ἔδωκεν
πρῶθ' ἑκατὸν βοῦς δῶκεν, ἔπειτα δὲ χεῖλι' ὑπέστη,
αἶγας ὁμοῦ καὶ ὄϊς, τὰ οἱ ἄσπετα ποιμαίνοντο.
δὴ τότε γ' Ἀτρείδης Ἀγαμέμνων ἐξενάριξεν,

And [Iphidamas], fallen there, slept a brazen sleep,
a pitiable man, a helper to his kinsman away from his wedded wife,
whose love he did not know at all, but he gave a lot [for her];
first he gave a hundred cattle, and then he promised a thousand,
goats as well as sheep, a countless number of which pastured in his fold.
But at that time did Atreus' son Agamemnon strip him.

The glancing mention of roots in *Il.* 11.157 may be part of a foundation in the narrative for the narrator's aside about Agamemnon's victims' wives. The Iphidamas passage further establishes the contrast between the homefront and the battlefield by explicitly stating that Iphidamas died far from his wife. The waste of his life's potential is connected here to the detailed enumeration of the wasted bride-price.³⁴ The narrator underscores the finality of Iphidamas' death by turning a surprising metaphor *χάλκεον ὕπνον* (241), which can be contrasted with marital tree imagery like that which we see in Odysseus' speech in *Odyssey* 23. While the survivor Odysseus reaches home and his ever-flourishing bed (*ἀκμηνὸς θαλέθων*, *Od.* 23.191) where he may sleep a rejuvenating sleep, Iphidamas dies far from home, away from his wife, destined to sleep the brazen sleep of death from which there can be no recovery of life.

³⁴ Cf. Hainsworth (1993: 250-251 *ad* 11.242-3) for further discussion of the pathetic elements of this scene, noted already in the T-scholia.

Moving now to the *Odyssey*, we find there too that roots connote stability. The *moly* root which Hermes gives to Odysseus to protect him against Circe would have been impossible for Odysseus to remove himself, as the text itself says (10.305-306): χαλεπὸν δέ τ' ὀρύσσειν / ἀνδράσι γε θνητοῖσι· θεοὶ δέ τε πάντα δύνανται. “And it is difficult for mortals to dig out / but gods are able to do everything.”³⁵ Odysseus uses similar language to describe how no mortal could possibly cut away his bedpost, but a god could (23.185-186).³⁶ Furthermore, the stability of Alcinous’ settlement on Scheria is symbolized especially in the long description of the Phaeacian garden (*Od.* 7.112-132), a place affected in no way by the change of seasons or the passage of time (again like Odysseus’ ever-flourishing bed). The narrator caps the description with a reference to roots: ἔνθα δέ οἱ πολύκαρπος ἀλωή ἐρρίζωται “There [Alcinous’] orchard with much produce had its roots” (*Od.* 7.122). The description of Alcinous’ orchard presents for Odysseus a kind of facsimile of his home, which is similarly anchored by the bedpost which he had constructed.³⁷ In a similar way, the fruit trees of Laertes’ orchard, which Odysseus recounts in sequence to prove his identity to his father in *Odyssey* 24 (340-343), provide a further sort of symbolic grounding. The fruit trees serve as a sign of recognition for father and son as the bed serves as a sign for husband and wife. Laertes’ gardening and Odysseus’ carpentry are similar in that both are forms of cultural work that protect social bonds against forces that threaten them.

³⁵ The other important association in play in this passage is the link between roots and medicine, an association also present in the *Iliad* passage in which Patroclus heals Eurypolus (*Il.* 11.844-848).

³⁶ While Heubeck (1989: 60 *ad* 10.302-6 notes that it is a folkloric motif that magic plants like *moly* are difficult to extract from the earth, I further find that the explicit mention of the root links this magic plant to a specifically Homeric motif that connects roots with plant-strength.

³⁷ The narrator ends his account of the Phaeacians by restating these themes with an ironic twist when he relates how Poseidon petrified the ship which carried Odysseus to Ithaca: ὅς μιν λᾶαν θῆκε καὶ ἐρρίζωσεν ἔνερθε “[Poseidon] made it a stone and rooted it from below” (13.163).

This essential stability of roots is assimilated to Odysseus' own character when he grasps the rooted fig tree to escape Charybdis (*Od.* 12.432-436):

αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ ποτὶ μακρὸν ἐρινεὸν ὑψόσ' ἀερθεῖς
τῷ προσφύς ἐχόμεν ὡς νυκτερίς· οὐδέ πη εἶχον
οὔτε στηρίξαι ποσὶν ἔμπεδον οὔτ' ἐπιβῆναι·
ρίζαι γὰρ ἐκὰς εἶχον, ἀπήωροι δ' ἔσαν ὄζοι,
μακροὶ τε μεγάλοι τε, κατεσκίαον δὲ Χάρυβδιν.

Then I, lifted aloft upon a great fig tree,
seizing onto it, held on like a bat; nor at all was I able
to get a secure foothold nor climb it;
for its roots were far off, and its branches were high,
tall and big, and they threw Charybdis into shadow.

This episode stretches the limits of the much-enduring hero. Although he tells the Phaeacians he cannot gain a secure foothold (ἔμπεδον, 434, a word which recurs, critically, at the end of Odysseus' speech to Penelope at 23.203), he manages to hold on (as he did to the belly of the ram in the Cyclops' cave and onto the pieces of his shattered raft) until Charybdis regurgitates the tree.³⁸ Nor, significantly, can the whirlpool Charybdis shatter the fig tree, but its roots hold, so that as long as Odysseus grips it, he is safe. The imperviousness of these fig roots to the whirlpool parallels the hardiness of the trees of the *Iliad*'s simile world against storm and flood.

The Charybdis episode as a whole reveals again Odysseus' penchant for opportunistic craftsmanship. When his raft is shattered he must improvise a life raft for himself (*Od.* 12:420-425):

Αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ διὰ νηὸς ἐφοίτων, ὄφρ' ἀπὸ τοίχους
λῦσε κλυδων τρόπιος· τὴν δὲ ψιλὴν φέρε κύμα.
ἐκ δὲ οἱ ἰστόν ἄραξε ποτὶ τρόπιν· αὐτὰρ ἐπ' αὐτῷ
ἐπίτονος βέβλητο, βοὸς ῥινοῖο τετευχώς.
τῷ ῥ' ἄμφω συνέεργον ὁμοῦ τρόπιν ἥδ' καὶ ἰστόν,
ἔζόμενος δ' ἐπὶ τοῖς φερόμεν ὀλοοῖς ἀνέμοισιν.

Then I moved about through the ship where the surge
had released the keel from the sides of the ship; and the wave carried it stripped.

³⁸ Odysseus brings out the importance of the fig tree by mentioning it as early as 12.103 amidst Circe's instructions. Cf. Heubeck (1989: 124 *ad* 12.103-110) and de Jong (2001: 311 *ad* 12.426-46).

And it broke off the mast at the keel; then the backstay, fashioned from oxhide
was thrown upon it; then I worked together the keel as well as the mast.
And taking my place on this I was carried by the accursed winds.

Out of the chaos of separation encapsulated in the storm Odysseus struggles but succeeds to put
together a way to survive. His success is not due to his strength—once aboard the raft he does
not have the power to direct it against the stormwinds—but it is rather due to his inventiveness
and tenacity.

Unlike the strongly rooted magic fig tree to which Odysseus clings to survive, the hero's
raft, to which he also clings when oppressed by Poseidon's vortexes, shatters under the similar
pressures of Poseidon's storm (*Od.* 5.313-318):

“Ὡς ἄρα μιν εἰπόντ’ ἔλασεν μέγα κῦμα κατ’ ἄκρης,
δεινὸν ἐπεσσύμενον, περὶ δὲ σχεδίων ἐλέλιξε.
τῆλε δ’ ἀπὸ σχεδίων αὐτὸς πέσε, πηδάλιον δὲ
ἐκ χειρῶν προέηκε· μέσον δὲ οἱ ἴστον ἔαξε
δεινὴ μισγομένων ἀνέμων ἐλθοῦσα θύελλα,
τηλοῦ δὲ σπείρον καὶ ἐπίκριον ἔμπεσε πόντῳ.

A great wave utterly drove upon [Odysseus] as he spoke thus,
rushing frightfully, and shattered his raft,
and Odysseus himself fell far away from the raft, and the oar
flew from his hands; and the terrible gale of mixed-up winds came up
and shattered the middle of his mast,
and the sail and yard arm fell on the sea far away [from him].

The comparison of these two passages reveals a great deal about Homer's attitude toward
craftsmanship, which we will explore further in relation to the *Iliad* in closing. Certainly the
rooted tree retains the capability to resist the elements whereby Odysseus' raft, which is
constructed from the fallen forests of Ogygia, cannot (5.237-243):

ἄρχε δ’ ὁδοῖο
νῆσου ἐπ’ ἐσχατιῆς, ὅθι δένδρεα μακρὰ πεφύκει,
κλήθρη τ’ αἰγείρος τ’, ἐλάτη τ’ ἦν οὐρανομήκης,
αὔα παλαι, περίκηλα, τά οἱ πλώοιεν ἐλαφρῶς.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ δείξ’ ὅθι δένδρεα μακρὰ πεφύκει,
ἣ μὲν ἔβη πρὸς δῶμα Καλυψώ, δῖα θεάων,
αὐτὰρ ὁ τάμνετο δοῦρα· θοῶς δὲ οἱ ἦνυτο ἔργον.

But he started on a journey to the edge of the island, where trees grow tall,

alder and poplar, and there was a fir as tall as the sky,
long dried out, very dry, which floated buoyantly for him.
Then when she showed him where the trees grew tall,
Calypso, shining of goddesses, went home,
and Odysseus cut planks, and accomplished the task quickly.

The process of transforming the trees into planks, a process of cutting with the axe (πελέκκησεν, 5.244), smoothing the bark (ξέσσε, 245), straightening (ἴθυνεν, 245), perforating (τέτρηνεν, 247), joining (ῥρμωσεν, 247), and hammering (ἄρασσεν, 248) closely parallels the way Odysseus built his bedpost where many of the same verbs recur (ἀμφέξεσα, 23.196; ἐπὶ στάθμην ἴθυνα, 197, τέτρηνα δὲ πάντα τερέτρῳ, 199). Yet Odysseus' raft does not survive Poseidon's storm because it is not rooted in the earth. In fact, the raft is just the opposite of a rooted tree: it is a vehicle.³⁹ Comparing the stability of Odysseus' bed and household in Ithaca with the instability of the raft Odysseus builds on Ogygia leads us to see a corresponding parallel between the hero's relationships with Penelope and Calypso. The two scenes share scenes of Odysseus' craftsmanship, and it is revealing that the unstable raft corresponds to the unsatisfying sexual union between Odysseus and Calypso and that the rooted bedpost stands for the lasting marital union between Odysseus and Penelope.

The fate of Odysseus' raft reveals the essential problem with craftsmanship in both poems. What is gained by producing an object of culture from a living thing growing in nature is offset by the fact that virtually all such objects are destructible. What is surprising, then, about Odysseus' bed is that, because it stays rooted in the earth, it retains its full complement of

³⁹ For an insightful comparison of the raft of Odysseus and the olive wood bedpost, see Dougherty (2001: 177-183). Dougherty rightly emphasizes how the story of the construction of the bedpost defines Odysseus' identity as a craftsman, just as the creation of the raft does. In that the raft is mobile and the bed stationary, Dougherty argues that the narrative engine driving the *Odyssey* stops as Odysseus gives up his raft for the bed. Yet we should also add that the narrative structure is more complex: Odysseus built the bed *before* going to Troy, building the raft and returning home.

vigorous energy that helps it to weather the assault which the suitors and the passage of years bring against it.

Indeed, here we find another motivating force behind the famous reverse simile of the shipwrecked sailor. The poet, just after Odysseus has described his crafting of the bedpost, contrasts the bed that survives the storm with the raft that breaks: (*Od.* 23.233-240):

ὥς δ' ὅτ' ἄν ἀσπασίος γῇ νηχομένοισι φανήη,
ὣν τε Ποσειδάων εὐεργέα νῆ' ἐνὶ πόντῳ
ῥαίση, ἐπειγομένην ἀνέμῳ καὶ κύματι πηγῶ·
παῦροι δ' ἐξέφυγον πολιῆς ἀλὸς ἠπειρόνδε
νηχόμενοι, πολλὰ δὲ περὶ χροῖ τέτροφεν ἄλμη,
ἀσπασιοὶ δ' ἐπέβαν γαίης, κακότητα φυγόντες·
ὥς ἄρα τῇ ἀσπαστὸς ἔην πόσις εἰσοροώσῃ,
δειρῆς δ' οὐ πῶ πάμπαν ἀφίετο πήχεε λευκῶ.

And as when land appears welcome to swimmers,
whose well-built ship Poseidon shattered on the sea,
it, being driven by wind and strong wave[s];
and few escape to dry land from the gray brine
by swimming, and much salt is thick on their skin,
and relieved they climb up upon land, having escaped the evil:
in this way did Penelope's husband appear glad to her as she looked at him,
and she had not yet released her white arms from his neck.

This celebrated passage, in addition to showing the essential unity of mind between Odysseus and Penelope as they reunite also evokes again the wanderings of Odysseus. The simile covers similar narrative ground that has already been covered in Book 5 (just as the reverse simile of Odysseus weeping like a Trojan widow at *Od.* 8.523-531 revisits Odysseus' exploits at Troy). Through this simile the narrator shows the audience how much more secure an anchor the bed is than the raft. This simile's proximity to the olive bed shows by contrast just how unique an object it is and how remarkable a craftsman Odysseus was to create an object of culture that retains a tree's hardness.

CONCLUSION: HEROICS OF DESTRUCTION AND CONSTRUCTION

We alluded just now to the fact that carpentry presents a problem in Homer because—despite the fact that it creates a useful and lasting object of culture—it destroys irrevocably the natural power of a living tree. Indeed, the power of Achilles’ critique of Agamemnon in *Iliad* Book 1 derives from this profound ambivalence toward craftsmanship in the *Iliad*. A close comparison of Achilles’ speech with Odysseus’ in Book 23 will bring out different outlooks on the problem. Achilles sees tree cutting as a fundamentally destructive act (*Il.* 1.234-239):

ἀλλ’ ἔκ τοι ἔρέω, καὶ ἐπὶ μέγαν ὄρκον ὁμοῦμαι—
ναὶ μὰ τόδε σκῆπτρον· τὸ μὲν οὐ ποτε φύλλα καὶ ὄζους
φύσει, ἐπεὶ δὴ πρῶτα τομῇν ἐν ὄρεσσι λέλοιπεν,
οὐδ’ ἀναθηλήσει· περὶ γάρ ῥα ἔχαλκός ἔλεψεν
φύλλα τε καὶ φλοιόν· νῦν αὐτέ μιν νῖες Ἀχαιῶν
ἐν παλάμῃς φορέουσι δικασπόλοι, οἳ τε θέμιστας
πρὸς Διὸς εἰρύαται· ὃ δέ τοι μέγας ἔσσεται ὄρκος—

But I will speak out and swear a great oath:
by this scepter, which will never grow leaves and shoots,
since it left its stump in the mountains,
and it will not bloom again; for the bronze stripped it of its
leaves and bark: now in turn the sons of the Achaeans,
the marshals, carry it in their hands, who protect the ordinances
of Zeus, and it will be a great oath:

For Achilles, because the leaves and shoots stop growing, the scepter loses any natural power the tree had contained. The comparisons we made in Chapter 4 of this passage to the evergreen scepter which Hesiod receives from the Muses brought out how Achilles’ manipulation depends for its effect on an idiosyncratic and counterintuitive idea that trees are fragile enough to be cut by victorious warriors. Our analysis of this speech in Chapter 2 showed how Achilles effectively undermined Agamemnon’s authority by calling into question the premises of heroism that connect tree cutting with killing. The “baseline” view, that is, the reasons why carpenters are heroic figures in Homer, is well expressed by Fränkel (1977 [1921]: 35):

Diese Männer gelten im Homer als pathetische Gestalten von hohem sittlichem und poetischem Gehalt. Was sie niederlegen, ist ja nicht ein Ding, das die vorige Generation

zweckvoll gepflanzt hat um Nutzolz herzustellen, sondern ein urwüchsiges Gebilde des wilden Waldes, an das sich ihre Menschenkraft wagt. Und vor allem: die weiche, leicht verbogene, schnell gestumpfte Branzeart ist dieser Männer einzige Waffe, und ihr Beruf verlangt von ihnen genau die gleiche Kraft des Schwunges, zähe Ausdauer, kundige Geschicklichkeit (Ψ 315), genau die gleichen Fähigkeiten des Körpers und des Charackters, über die auch der Krieger verfügen muß.

These men are considered in Homer as pathetic figures of high moral and poetic meaning. What they lay down, is not really a thing, which the previous generation has purposefully planted, to produce timber, but rather a powerful object of the wild forest for which their manpower takes risk. And especially: the soft, easily bent, quickly blunted brazen-ware is the only weapon of these men, and their job requires the exact same strength of energy, tenacious stamina, expert skill (23.315), the exact same ability of body and character, which the warrior must also have at his disposal.

One key point Fränkel takes pains to make clear to his readers—besides the sheer difficulty of tree cutting, which he insists is hard for modern readers to appreciate—is a distinction between nature and culture. Fränkel implies that while Homer and his audience might feel ambivalent about the destruction of a productive cultivated tree, that they would feel no such compunction about wild trees.⁴⁰ Cultivated trees (as the young olive tree to which Euphorbus is compared in Book 17) are so vulnerable as to immediately evoke the pathetic image of a bereaved parent, which always threatens to check the momentum of an *aristeia* as it develops or distract the audience with the implications of their favorite hero's violence.⁴¹ A wild and mature tree, however, puts up such a fight that any hero who succeeds at felling it deserves the glory he wins by felling it.

⁴⁰ Connected with this ambivalence is Homer's habit of likening parents and children with gardeners and the shoots under their care, on which see Chapters 1 and 4. In the *Odyssey*, the reunion of Laertes with Odysseus in Book 24 particularly plays on these themes. See Henderson (1997) and Pucci (1996) for analyses of this important scene.

⁴¹ Scodel (2002: 13-14), in an interesting speculation about the story of Priam's son Troilus, which Homer does not develop, suggests that epic poems before the *Iliad* did not treat the Trojans sympathetically.

Yet we showed in our second chapter that Achilles challenges this heroic paradigm by denying a place for the victorious woodcutter in his oath, by instead putting emphasis upon the tree whose cyclical pattern of growing leaves and shoots is permanently arrested (themes which we treated in Chapter 3). Achilles finds a way to challenge the conventional view of heroism promulgated through the *Iliad*'s similes by shining a light on a critical problem suggested by this imagery—that crafting an object, even if it is very beautiful, like the chariot to which the Simoesius poplar is going to contribute its flexible wood, kills the living natural object. The death of the tree stops the flow of generative energy in a moment of destructiveness. On this view, craftsmanship is ironically, and paradoxically, a destructive act, whose moral implications is one of the major themes the *Iliad* explores throughout the battle narrative.

The *Odyssey*, I submit, through the image of the bed, suggests a more constructive view of heroism, in which Odysseus, in a sense, answers Achilles' challenge. The test of the bed proves that Odysseus has succeeded at crafting a house and a marriage that, although threatened by the incursions of the suitors, nevertheless remains fundamentally impervious to outside troubles. That this is the ideal function of beds and lodgings, we may fruitfully compare the passage in Book 13 with Odysseus' improvised bed of olive leaves in Book 5 in a place where rain and wind cannot reach (τοὺς μὲν ἄρ' οὐτ' ἀνέμων διάη μένος ὑγρὸν ἀέντων, 5.478) and the lair of the boar which Odysseus slew as a young man on Parnassus (τὴν μὲν ἄρ' οὐτ' ἀνέμων διάη μένος ὑγρὸν ἀέντων, 19.440).⁴² The poem draws its suspense from posing the question—and delaying the answer until the end—whether Odysseus has successfully superseded the Iliadic paradigm of destructive heroism with a constructive alternative.

⁴² Rutherford (1992: 188 *ad* 19.439-43) notes the replication of language in the two passages and attributes the repetitions to “a casual reuse of formulae.”

Odysseus' construction of the raft at the beginning of the poem demonstrates to the narratees his competence at craftsmanship. The elaborate description abundantly demonstrates how important craftsmanship is as a theme for the poet of the *Odyssey*. Yet when the raft breaks in Poseidon's storm it goes the way of crafted objects in Homer, as the scepter does. While Odysseus is certainly a capable craftsman, Poseidon's might is easily able to destroy his efforts, as it is foretold that Poseidon and Apollo destroy the Achaean wall in *Iliad* Book 12.10-39, and as Odysseus disclaims in his speech to Penelope. The hero has learned from experience that gods have more power than men do. Penelope is fortunate to have the support of Athena (a goddess closely associated with cunning and with Odysseus himself) to keep the bed secure.

Odysseus' speech, then, and its resolution, relieves the suspense that has accumulated over the course of the entire poem, whether Athena and Penelope have been true to Odysseus and whether his bed, still rooted in the same spot where it had grown for time immemorial, has remained just as it was. Odysseus succeeds where the *Iliad* suggests that all mortal efforts of craftsmanship are doomed to failure, crafting a bed, a household, and a home that survives for many years in spite of being his own work because he has the support of Athena and because he kept the tree's roots intact. Because the roots are intact, the tree retains its hardiness and vigor and cannot be moved by any mortal effort.

Conclusion

In this work we have sought to relate tree imagery appearing in the direct speech of Homer's characters to the narrator's tree similes, mostly found in the *Iliad*'s battle narrative. To craft these images of the speeches and of the narrative, the poet manipulates a traditional motif linking the growth, flourishing, and decay of trees with the life and death of human beings. This time-honored motif reflects a universal folkloric kinship between trees and people and quite probably occupied a privileged place in the thematic arsenal of the bards of Proto Indo-European heroic song, as we discussed in our first chapter. As far as Homer is concerned, trees and plants comprise a stock theme of Homeric similes, as Fränkel and Scott have amply shown. To my mind, the "poetry" of Homeric poetry is made when the poet rings changes upon these themes, relying on the network of traditional associations engendered by them to create resonant poetic effects (Foley's traditional referentiality). We have shown above all that the differences of detail that appear in images across the Homeric corpus matter. These differences allow the careful reader to see that this one family of imagery can cover a remarkably wide thematic range, that the narrator and characters use this same imagery for quite different purposes, and that in the poet's hands, similes are powerful tools of characterization.

We have shown that the tree simile family has a wide expressive range that can cover the essential strength and vulnerability of mortals. The details of a given simile reveal the relative strength of a hero. The poet reserves sapling imagery and diction such as ἔρνος or θάλος "sapling, shoot," for children like Nausicaa and Telemachus, or for warriors pathetically portrayed as children like Achilles or Hector, because young trees connote mortal vulnerability most strongly, as we showed at the end of Chapter 4. Saplings are so vulnerable that even the wind can uproot them, as a sudden storm blows down the olive sapling to which Euphorbus is

compared, but wind cannot destroy full-grown trees, as we showed in Chapter 2. When the poet compares a dying Trojan like Simoesius to a falling poplar tree and the victor Ajax to the wheelwright crafting a chariot, he conveys the strength, grace, and beauty of Simoesius and acknowledges with regret the unfulfilled promise of his youth, but simultaneously reinforces the inexorable strength of Ajax. Such tree-craftsman similes in the Iliadic battle narrative, therefore, offer praise to both sides because the craftsman must make a genuine effort to fell a sturdy tree. We also showed in Chapter 2 how tree-craftsman similes contribute to the narrator's pro-Achaean bias because the narrator never portrays the Trojans as victorious woodcutters. Any explicit mention of roots in a tree simile dramatically reduces the element of vulnerability inhering in the tree-human comparison, as we discussed in Chapter 5. Because the poet can manipulate the details of each tree likeness, the tree simile family possesses a substantial expressive range.

We have also shown that the narrator uses tree similes differently from the way the characters do. Because the narrator tends to praise his subjects, tree similes in the main narrative tend to extol the heroes. The characters, by contrast, often criticize one another in their speeches, and tree imagery forms an important part of their rhetorical arsenal deployed for blame. For example, we showed in Chapter 2 how Achilles' excursus on Agamemnon's scepter turns the motif of tree destruction, which the narrator regularly uses to praise victorious Achaeans, into a device for blaming Agamemnon. In Chapter 3, moreover, we showed how the narrator regularly uses leaf imagery to convey the size and vigor of formidable armies, while a character like Glaucus uses similar imagery in his speech to Diomedes to mock and belittle his opponent.

The narrator tends, then, to downplay the vulnerability of his characters so as not to showcase their weakness. Accordingly, we find sapling likenesses chiefly in character speech,

and especially in the speech of parents to their doomed sons, as we showed in Chapter 4. In Odysseus' supplication to Nausicaa, Odysseus draws on the association of saplings to children in order to cast himself as a father figure to the princesses, not as her potential lover, while eschewing the pathetic associations which this imagery carries in the *Iliad*, which are out of place in the *Odyssey* (and especially among the Phaeacians).

The similes which a character employs in speech serve as subtle tools of characterization. The case of Odysseus, whom we have studied in Chapters 4 and 5, is especially revealing. Both of the speeches we have analyzed forge a connection between trees and marriage. The hardness of a rooted tree becomes in his speech to Penelope in *Od.* 23 a fitting symbol for the durability of his union with his wife. Yet in *Od.* 6, as we saw in Chapter 4, Odysseus uses the tree as part of a calculating and emotionally cool epithalamium, which seeks to discourage an amorous connection with the princess.

Odysseus' rhetorical manipulation of trees in his speeches to Nausicaa and Penelope finds a parallel in Odysseus' own actions. Odysseus is the consummate craftsman, ever scanning his environment to turn a tree or a piece of wood to his own advantage. His success, in the cases of the Cyclops' stake, his raft, and, finally and most emphatically, with his marriage bed, are tangible symbols of his heroism, as we showed in Ch. 5. Given the hero's character, it should come as no surprise that Odysseus fashions tree similes as cleverly as he shapes actual trees with a carpenter's tools.

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