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The Boy whom Hector called Scamandrius: The Natural World and Cosmic Time in the *Iliad* of Homer

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by

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ABSTRACT

The Boy whom Hector called Scamandrius: The Natural World and Cosmic Time in the *Iliad* of Homer

By

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This dissertation presents a new analysis of the natural world in Homer's *Iliad*. Focusing on descriptions of landscape, trees, and rivers, within similes and in the main narrative, the thesis has three main arguments: first, representations of Gaia in the *Iliad* can productively be read through and against representations of Gaia in the wider epic tradition, as in Hesiod's *Theogony* (and to a lesser extent the *Cypria*). It is only through a more expansive intertextual analysis that we can see how, for Homer, the destruction of the natural world has *cosmic* significance. Second, descriptions of the natural world are not just part of the realism of the poem; rather they are motivated, ideological, and play a significant role in differentiating Achaeans from Trojans. These differentiations afford a richer and more complicated dimension to violence and death than has previously been recognized. Third, the representation of the natural world is an inextricable part of Homer's creation of temporality: the epic's reflections on the past, present, and its visions of the future offer insight into the question of human interaction with the environment and the implications of that changing relationship. The dissertation aims to make a contribution to our understanding of Homer's

epic, but also to how ancient texts can reveal, and reflect upon, today's most urgent political issue: the destruction of the environment and what this will mean for humans and for the earth.

Chapter 1 analyzes the representation of Gaia in Hesiod's *Theogony,* the *Cypria,* and finally in Homer's *Iliad* to suggest that when the poet of the *Iliad* uses the simile of Typhoeus at *Il*. 2.780-85 s/he evokes the narrative of cosmic war and progress as detailed in the *Theogony,* thus projecting the Hesiodic narrative onto the Homeric. As a result, the Gaia we see in the *Iliad* is constantly between subject and object, helper and destroyer, in a duality bound with time and space that plays out in the inextricability of Trojans to the natural world, and the Achaeans as destroyers of that world.

Chapter 2 briefly considers the state of the natural world as envisioned *before* the events of the *Iliad,* envisioned as practical and interdependent with both Trojans and Achaeans as seen in the funeral of Eëtion in *Il*. 6.416-20, before moving to a broader discussion of the natural world in the present narrative of the poem. The move from past to present reflects a shift in the relation between the Trojan people and the natural world to one of unity and connection in a strictly symbolic and figural sense, as in the formulation "the Scaean gates and the oak tree".

Chapter 3 moves towards a catalogue of the destruction of the natural world in the present narrative of the poem at the hands of the Achaeans who act as the executors of Zeus' will within the *re*-framing of the cosmic narrative, and suggests an ethical dimension to the killing of Trojans in *nature-centric* terms.

Finally, Chapter 4 discusses “future time” and the natural world as revealed in the poem’s ominous vision of a post-war world which suggests the permanence of nature beyond its cosmic entanglement with time and space in the *Iliad*, a future which is envisioned at the expense of the *human*. By analyzing the fragility of human-made tombs and the makeshift Achaean wall in the poem, we see that the *Iliad* portends an apocalyptic future brought upon by earth and water which sees the forces of nature destroy the works of humans, reacting in turn to the human destruction of the natural world in the present.

What we are left with is a complex web of interrelationships between humans, gods, and the natural world that presents a hybrid and dynamic vision of interaction. The *Iliad*’s representation of past, present, and future coincides with different categories of interaction between humans and the natural world. The past suggests an idyllic vision of coexistence and collaboration, the present carries out the reenactment of cosmic war and thus brings climatic devastation upon the natural world, and the future reveals the divorce of gods and nature from the human world.

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Introduction

In one of the most climactic moments of the *Iliad*, Book 22 describes as Achilles chases Hector around the walls of Troy "as in a dream", the pursuer never quite able to catch his prey, the runner never able fully to escape.[1] As the poet narrates the action, s/he describes a similarly dream-like scene triggered by the natural environment in which Achilles and Hector are running:

οἳ δὲ παρὰ σκοπιὴν καὶ ἐρινεὸν ἠνεμόεντα
τείχεος αἰὲν ὑπ᾽ ἐκ κατ᾽ ἀμαξιτὸν ἐσσεύοντο,
κρουνὼ δ᾽ ἵκανον καλλιρρόω; ἔνθα δὲ πηγαὶ
δοιαὶ ἀναΐσσουσι Σκαμάνδρου δινήεντος.
ἣ μὲν γάρ θ᾽ ὕδατι λιαρῷ ῥέει, ἀμφὶ δὲ καπνὸς
γίγνεται ἐξ αὐτῆς ὡς εἰ πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο·
ἣ δ᾽ ἑτέρη θέρεϊ προρέει ἐϊκυῖα χαλάζῃ,
ἢ χιόνι ψυχρῇ ἢ ἐξ ὕδατος κρυστάλλῳ.
ἔνθα δ᾽ ἐπ᾽ αὐτάων πλυνοὶ εὐρέες ἐγγὺς ἔασι
καλοὶ λαΐνεοι, ὅθι εἵματα σιγαλόεντα
πλύνεσκον Τρώων ἄλοχοι καλαί τε θύγατρες
τὸ πρὶν ἐπ᾽ εἰρήνης πρὶν ἐλθεῖν υἷας Ἀχαιῶν.[2]

They raced along by the watching point and the windy fig tree
Always away from under the wall and along the wagon-way
And came to the two sweet-running well springs. There, there are double
Springs of water that jet up, the springs of whirling Scamander.

[1] *Iliad* 22.199-201. All English translations of the *Iliad* are taken from Lattimore 1951, with modification.
[2] All Greek from the *Iliad* is taken from Monro and Allen 1920.

> One of these runs hot water and the steam on all sides
> Rises as if from a fire that was burning inside it.
> But the other in the summer-time runs water that is like hail
> Or chill snow or ice that forms from water. Beside these
> In this place, and close to them, are the washing-hollows
> Of stone, and magnificent, where the wives of the Trojans and their lovely
> Daughters washed the clothes to shining, in the old days
> When there was peace, before the coming of the sons of the Achaeans.
>
> *Il*. 22.145-156.

This is one of many scenes that prolongs the build-up to Hector's imminent death, scenes which include at least four similes and conversation amongst the gods over the course of over 200 lines, from when Hector began running, up until his death and the departure of his soul from his body (*Iliad* 22.136-363). These vignettes prolong the sequence of Hector's imminent death and underscore the significance of the drama, as with the death of Hector is signaled the proleptic death and destruction of Troy and all its people.

This passage in particular looks back into a dream-like past, "before the coming of the sons of the Achaeans", when there was peace in the land of the Trojans. However, this peaceful moment is not just signaled by the absence of war or the existential threat of invaders, but also by human activity and the presence of the natural world. That is, this scene is marked by the depiction of a specific kind of relationship between humans and their environment, and further places this depiction in relation to *time*, describing as it does this episode in a mostly unspecified past. Not only do we see the presence of the natural springs of the river Scamander, but we also see the human cultural activity of the Trojan women washing clothes. We see the coming together of human and nature, erasing the boundaries

that would separate the two. Moreover, the knowledge that Scamander is a river-*god* further complicates and dissolves this binary of nature-culture:[3] we see humans, the natural world, and the divine come together in a symbiotic, interdependent relationship that is described as a time of peace. It is a place of cultural significance just as much as it is an environmental wonder: the double springs of hot and cold water are useful to the Trojan people while existing naturally in the landscape.

This scene invites us to ask questions about the characteristics of the natural world in the *Iliad*, its relation to the narrative, its characters, and the human world. From an anthropocentric perspective, we may think of this as the relationship between humans and *their* environment: how is the relationship between humans and the environment depicted in Homer's *Iliad*? How does this depiction relate to and impact the narrative and its characters? And how do these depictions change the way we read the poem? We may also ask how time relates to the depiction of humans and the environment: do depictions of the past and the environment always correlate with peace and interdependence, as in the above example? How do the present and future relate to the human-environment relationship? In the above example, the peaceful past is directly juxtaposed with the imminent death of Hector (and Troy) in the present time of the narrative, which we will discover later is filled with imagery of the destruction of the environment.

The *Iliad* presents numerous depictions of the natural world, in similes, metaphors, and the narrative action, and describes human interaction with the environment in various ways: from images linking fighting heroes to rivers, wind, and fire, to depicting the close

[3] Achilles has just fought with Scamander in the previous book, 21.

connection of the Trojan people with the oak tree, and likewise of the Achaean invaders with tree-cutters. This thesis presents a series of close readings of key passages that focus on human-environment interactions, especially those involving trees, fire, and rivers. Questions like those listed above arise naturally from these depictions and help us to understand what function and meaning the poem attributes to the human-environment relationship. Moreover, these are questions that are at the heart of ecocriticism, a modern theoretical framework that at its most basic level analyzes the relationship between humans and the natural world in literature.[4] We will discuss ecocriticism in more detail in what is to come, but for now we may note that with an ecocritical lens we may further scrutinize not only *how* the human-environment relationship is depicted, but *what effect* these depictions have on the narrative and its characters, and how we can bring this analysis to bear on our own relationship with the natural world. In the above example in *Iliad* 22, we may ask ourselves: if the present action of the *Iliad* is set during wartime, should we expect nature to be destroyed? Inversely, what are the effects of images of the natural world, like the rivers of Troy, destroying human cultural objects like graves and walls? These are questions that emerge from this human-environment relationship in the *Iliad* and which reveal an intimate connection between the natural world, time, and storytelling in the poem.

*

[4] Garrard 2004, 2012; Hiltner 2015; Schliephake 2017.

The contents of the Dissertation include the Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and the Conclusion. In general, the chapters move temporally in relation to the narrative time of the *Iliad*: from the cosmic, mythological past, to the recent past, to the present, and finally to the future. Chapter 1 aims to establish the relationship between Gaia, the natural world, and the natural world's destruction in *Iliad* 2 in relation to the cosmic past as seen in the wider epic tradition—in Hesiod's *Theogony* and in the *Cypria* of the *Epic Cycle*. By analyzing the figure of Gaia in Homer and in the wider epic tradition alongside the simile of her last child Typhoeus being set on fire and destroyed in *Iliad* 2, I argue that in these images of Gaia and of environmental destruction is encoded a link to the wider epic tradition and cosmic time, which places the events of Homer's poem within this continuum of time and narrative. Moreover, I argue that the *Iliad* redeploys from that wider epic tradition the imagery of the destruction of the environment (and the imagery used to depict the agents of that destruction—fire, lightning, etc.) in order to characterize the Trojans and the Achaeans. The warriors in both armies are cast in a relationship that plays out through the imagery of nature and through reimagining war through and against environmental devastation. By thinking about the resonant nature of the Homeric poems,[5] Chapter 1 argues that the links within the epic tradition are made clear, and that Homer lays the events of the poem against the backdrop of the cosmic past through the image of the conflagration of Gaia and the natural world.

Chapter 2 is comprised of two sections: a shorter section that analyzes the human-environment relationship in connection with the recent past in the *Iliad*, and a second section

[5] I will discuss the resonance of epic poetry in Chapter 1.

on the depiction of the relationship between the Trojan people and the environment in the present narrative of the *Iliad*. After an opening discussion on *time* and its use in the *Iliad*, the first section examines episodes in the Homeric poem that depict the human-environment relationship in a time prior to the events of the present narrative, and I argue that these episodes suggest a human-environment relationship that is harmonious and interdependent—as we saw in the above example in *Iliad* 22. These passages, whether in an unspecified past or only a few days prior to the present action, put forth an ideal relationship between humans, environment, and divinity that is not only harmonious, but practical: humans are shown to mingle together with the divine, to depend upon the natural world, and vice-versa. I argue as well that this ideal past is beyond the reach of the narrative and characters of the present action, as is shown in the next section.

The second section identifies and analyzes the relationship between the Trojans and the environment and what characterizes this relationship in the present time—an attunement to the temporal aspect of these depictions is important here, as there is a shift from past to present. I focus more closely on the representation of the Trojans and analyze the close connection that the Trojan people share with their environment—especially with rivers and trees. I argue that this closeness between the Trojans and their environment is distinct from the closeness between all humans and the environment analyzed in the previous section, which was viewed in relation to a time prior to the events of the *Iliad*. While the past shows a human-environment relationship that is practical and interdependent (as argued for in the previous section), and "real" within the world of the poem,[6] the present shows that this

[6] Terms like "real" and "imagined" are obviously tricky, but some distinction needs making between literary realism, even within the constraints of a poetic world, and figurative depiction.

closeness between the Trojans and the natural world exists only on the symbolic and figurative level: through the image of the oak tree, children named after the rivers of Troy, and the similes. I argue that we can discern a clear division between human-environment relationships in the past and the present, and that this division is an important aspect of the poetics of the *Iliad* that signals that the relationship between humans and the environment is inextricably linked with temporality.

Chapter 3 maintains an analysis of episodes in the present action of the poem, but moves onto consider scenes that depict the *destruction* of the natural world in the *Iliad*. By analyzing key passages that feature the destruction and conflagration of trees, rivers, and the earth, I argue that the present action of Homer's poem redeploys the imagery of environmental devastation that we see in the simile of Typhoeus in *Iliad* 2 (as discussed in Chapter 1), thereby linking the Achaeans to destroyers of the natural world, and the Trojans to the natural world destroyed. Furthermore, in so doing the poet of the *Iliad* marks the events of the poem not only as connected to the wider epic tradition, but as of equal significance to these cosmic and mythological moments therein. This coming together of cosmic significance with the present action of the poem is best represented in the mortal combat between Achilles and the river-god Scamander in *Iliad* 21, and is discussed at the end of the chapter. The massive scale on which the present action of the poem depicts the destruction of the natural environment—in the realm of both narrative action and simile—marks a significant moment in the *Iliad*'s representation of human history, and suggests that in killing the environment, humankind has also killed their own future.

Chapter 4 moves finally to the depiction of the human-environment relationship in the *Iliad* as seen in visions of the future—in a time *after* the events of the poem. Once again, the

temporal shift, this time from present to future, is marked also by a shift in the nature of the human-environment relationship: where the present is marked by the destruction of the natural world by human agents, the future portends an ominous vision where the natural world destroys and conceals the human world. Two kinds of human monuments are important here: tombs and the wall of the Achaeans. By analyzing the relationship between tombs and the passage of time, as well as the proleptic destruction of the Achaean wall described in *Iliad* 12, I argue not only that are human artifacts subject to oblivion in the future, but that aspects of the environment like the earth and rivers are shown to be agentic and intentional in their willful destruction and subsumption of the human. Thus, the natural world does not simply provide a colorful background within which the narrative and its characters exist, but becomes an agent in its own right, affecting the characters and narrative in a future time where the natural environment erases the human.

Finally, the Conclusion recaps the arguments put forth in the previous four chapters, but also looks forward and beyond the scope of Homer's *Iliad* in three ways: first, by providing a brief sketch of how the analysis in this thesis may be extended to Homer's *Odyssey*; second, by suggesting a new line of inquiry that explores how ancient audiences and readers of Homer may have experienced depictions of human-environment interaction in the poem; and third, by discussing how we may think about this analysis in ecocritical terms—how the *Iliad* might help us to think about our own relationship to the environment, and the environmental crisis of our own time. Thus, the Conclusion moves us from the cosmic past to the modern present. Can we use the *Iliad* productively to think about the environmental crisis, discussions about which are always framed not by the present, but by the past and the future: how we got here, and where we are going?

*

In order best to orient my work, it will be helpful to sketch out not only a brief history of scholarship on environmental aspects in Homer, but also of the ecocritical turn that Homeric studies have taken in recent times. This is because my research nestles somewhere in between modern approaches to Homeric studies that use an ecocritical perspective to ask specific questions about the depiction of the human-environment relationship, and traditional close readings of key passages in the ancient texts that feature elements of the natural world. Thus, viewing the two strands of scholarship side-by-side will help both to see how approaches to this topic have evolved over time, and where I situate my own work.

Modern scholarship has been occupied with analyzing environmental aspects of the natural world in Homer long before the advent of ecocriticism, both in isolated close readings of individual passages, and in extended studies of the natural world. For example, the seminal works of Nagy[7] and Griffin[8] incorporate important analyses of aspects of the natural world in Homer in order to present an examination of the connections between hero cult worship and the praise of heroes in epic poetry, and of Homer's depiction of heroic life and death, respectively. While the focus of their work is not explicitly concerned with depictions of the natural world, analysis of individual passages or groups of passages necessarily feature

[7] Nagy 1979, 174-210 discusses the concepts of mortality and immortality, in part as related to vegetal death, growth, and continuity.
[8] Griffin 1980 analyzes depictions of the natural world in Homer throughout his work, especially the similes that feature in the "obituaries" of young warriors (p. 103-143 in particular).

in their scholarship, seeing as the imagery of nature is a fundamental part of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The same can be said for Schein[9], Lynn-George,[10] Alden,[11] Minchin,[12] Buchan,[13] and de Jong,[14] who similarly weave within their work discussion and analysis of passages in the Homeric poems that feature environmental aspects. Indeed, we may even admit that any attempt at working within Homeric studies under the umbrella of themes like narrative, glory, or life and death, requires some engagement with these environmental elements. My own methodology and exploration of some of these environmental depictions in Homer begins with a close engagement of the ancient text, its form and language, and the value of the immediate and wider context to individual passages, which follows the scholars cited above. However, as my research offers an extended analysis that examines specifically aspects of the natural world in the *Iliad*, it will be helpful to discuss scholarship that has focused exclusively on the natural world in Homer, before moving on to scholarship that begins to incorporate an ecocritical perspective to the Homeric poems.

One of the earliest accounts of modern scholarship that focuses on environmental elements in Homer is Forster's 1936 article, "Trees and Plants in Homer".[15] In the article Forster declares it fascinating to attempt to trace the extent of the "botanical knowledge" of

[9] Schein 1984 analyzes various passages depicting imagery of the natural world, especially, like Griffin, in the similes, in order to examine the *Iliad*'s major meditation on life and death.
[10] Lynn-George 1988. An especially brilliant close reading of the shield of Achilles on 176-192. For further analysis of the shield of Achilles, see Taplin 2001 and Alden below.
[11] Alden 2000, 48-73 discusses, like Lynn-George, the shield of Achilles and the ways in which the scenes depicted therein illuminate the main narrative.
[12] Minchin 2001 examines various simile groups in order to evaluate "storytelling-in-performance" and its relation to memory.
[13] Buchan 2004 closely analyzes various episodes in the *Odyssey* where Odysseus encounters non-human beings during his return to Ithaca, in order to explore a heroism which is marked, seemingly at every turn, by desire.
[14] de Jong 2012 efficiently examines depictions of space—especially landmarks like trees and tombs located on the Trojan plain—in order to argue about the function and meaning of space in the Homeric poems.
[15] Forster 1936.

Greek authors, and aims to "try to draw some conclusions as to the interest in, and the attitude towards, plant life displayed in these poems."[16] After enumerating the various trees, fruit-trees, shrubs, flowers, vegetables, and other plants that are depicted in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Forster declares that Homer's interest is "in man rather than in nature", and that the trees and plants are mentioned "not for their own sake but in connection with their usefulness to man".[17] Lastly, Forster observes that for Homer, "Nature, duly tamed and arranged, provides an ideal background for man's more peaceful activities and produces what he needs for his sustenance, his comfort and his delight".[18] Though nearly a century old, a core part of Forster's analysis of the significance of the natural world in Homer remains throughout much of the earlier scholarship on this topic: that elements of the natural world are present in the Homeric poems only to serve the (hu)man, and otherwise seen only as a background to the main action and the human protagonists.[19] As such, the neat divisions of "nature" and "culture" appear over and over again,[20] and little room is given to explore spaces in the poems where these divisions are not so clear cut, when nature is not *just* useful or dangerous to the human world.

At its core, what I find to be most limiting about this strand of scholarship on the natural world in Homer is not so much its stubborn focus on the (hu)man as its lack of focus

[16] Forster 1936: 97-98.
[17] Forster 1936: 102.
[18] Forster 1936: 104.
[19] Thus also Soutar 1939 and Whitman 1958: in an extended analysis of "fire and other elements", Whitman says about the sea that although it "seldom enters decisively into the emotional or dramatic scheme of the *Iliad* as it does in the *Odyssey*, the sea is always there as the vast backdrop of the poem." (p. 146). Though I should note that Whitman does give more *agency* to the natural elements, an aspect of this scholarship of which I speak more below.
[20] One example is scholarship based on the tree similes in the Homeric poems, where we often find the usefulness of the felled tree—its relation to "culture"—contrasted to its existence outside of the human world—its relation to "nature". See for example, Fränkel 1921; Reckford 1972; Meiggs 1982; Rood 2008; Stein 2016.

on the environmental counterpart to the human. Many of these analyses focus on what the connection between human and nature does for the human, not the other way around. For example, when analyzing a simile that compares a dying warrior to a fallen tree, this scholarship tends to focus on the result for the characterization of the human, and not what comparing a tree to a dying hero does for the arboreal world.[21] However, although the central point of analysis in scholarship on the natural world in Homer continues to be the (hu)man, the work of Segal and Redfield goes a long way towards complicating the binaries of "nature" and "culture", and shift the focus a little more on the power and agency of the natural world in relation to the human.

Segal's 1963 article, "Nature and the World of Man in Greek Literature", is an attempt to "sketch the changing conception of the relations between man and nature in the Archaic period, in fifth-century tragedy, and in the fourth century and the beginnings of pastoral as a literary form".[22] Although by his own admission Segal states that such a broad analysis will necessarily be oversimplified, he nevertheless successfully traces "certain continuities and contrasts" in various genres throughout the archaic, classical, and hellenistic periods that relate to "the Greek view of man's position in the world."[23] While Segal basis his analysis in relation to "Man"—as the title to his work reveals—he nevertheless observes a certain agency to the natural world that is otherwise not present in the scholarship cited above. Turning back to the Homeric poems, Segal argues that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*

[21] This is especially jarring, seeing as the ancient scholia often refer to the effect of such similes on the natural element; e.g., Eustathius (926.54) says of a tree simile in *Iliad* 13.177-82: "The comparison is emotional, and the poet speaks as though he sympathized with the tree: so say older writers."
[22] Segal 1963.
[23] Segal 1963:19.

present a non-human world that is "supernatural" and "autonomous".[24] Ultimately, for Segal the Homeric poems reflect an attitude towards the natural world that is marked by mystery and the feebleness of man,[25] in part due to nature's connection to the gods, but also through a characteristic of mystery and danger that remains unspecified. Thus, the characters in the world of the poems face non-human forces and elements that are greater than and often dangerous to them, a sentiment that is also observed by Redfield in his 1975 monograph, *Nature and Culture in the* Iliad.[26] But where Segal leaves little room to explore the space between the binary of "nature" and "culture", Redfield—surprisingly, given the title of his work—provides an analysis of the two categories in the *Iliad* that complicates the two and explores passages in the text where the categories collapse and are much more difficult to parse. As Holmes says of Redfield regarding the two categories, his work "is a far more supple analysis of the crossings of those terms".[27] Redfield analyzes the changing role of the Homeric warrior in relation to "nature" and "culture" in a time of war, placing the hero "on the frontier between nature and culture",[28] and thus as a part of both realms. This coming-together of the binary explored in earlier scholarship allows for readings of the Homeric poems that are richer and more complex in how they categorize elements of the natural world and their relation to the human. A few analyses of these are listed below.

Although Holmes praises Redfield's treatment of the categories of "nature" and "culture", she also moves beyond these two categories in her own scholarship.[29] This is

[24] Segal 1963:22.
[25] Segal 1963:20.
[26] Redfield 1975 (second ed. 1994).
[27] Holmes 2015: 33 n. 10.
[28] Redfield 1975: 101.
[29] Holmes 2015, 33: "The stability and the separability of the categories 'nature' and 'culture' in Redfield's analysis, however, rely on a nineteenth-century anthropological framework…".

generally the turn that Homeric scholarship on the natural world takes, together with research that is done with ecocritical theory, which we will discuss further below. Fenno's article, "'A Great Wave against the Stream': Water Imagery in Iliadic Battle Scenes",[30] explores not only how water imagery is used to further characterize the human protagonists of the *Iliad*, but also how the imagery itself infiltrates the poem and can be seen in the actions of war even where there is no water present. Fenno argues that not only do the human heroes themselves become like forces of water, but bodies of water become "sympathetically animated warriors" themselves[31]—thus, the focus of Fenno's analysis is as much on the natural element as it is on the human. This turn to decentering the human from scholarship on the natural world—though maintaining the human *in relation to* the natural world—is the characteristic difference in this strand of scholarship.

My current research is indebted to the work that has been done (and is currently being done) in the last 20 years on the non-human, natural world in Homeric and ancient studies by scholars like Purves,[32] Payne,[33] König,[34] Christensen,[35] and Holmes.[36] In her article, "Wind and Time in the Homeric Epic",[37] Purves analyzes the way that the element of the wind moves beyond the bounds of the Homeric similes and plays a crucial role in shaping the narratives of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Likewise, as mentioned above, Holmes analyzes the figure of the river-god Scamander in the *Iliad* not through the categories of "nature" and

[30] Fenno 2005.
[31] Fenno 2005: 475.
[32] Purves 2010a and b, 2015.
[33] Payne 2010, 2020.
[34] König (ed.) 2021.
[35] Christensen 2018, 2020.
[36] Holmes 2015.
[37] Purves 2010b.

"culture", but as a "naturalcultural force" in the poem.[38] As Holmes states, the aim of her analysis is to "open up further lines of inquiry into the moral and affective landscape of the *Iliad* as a space traversed by naturalcultural forces whose differences do not map easily onto our usual categories and whose dimensions come most sharply into focus not in isolation but in encounter and in the relation."[39] For Holmes, Purves, Christensen, König, and Payne, the traditional categories of "nature" and "culture" simply do not have the capacity to account for the many complexities that make up the depiction of elements of the environment in the Homeric poems, and in other ancient texts. As a result, their scholarship has, as Holmes hoped for in her article, opened up new ways of viewing the non-human, natural world in the Homeric poems, one of those being through the lens of ecocritical theory.

To be sure, ecocriticism has been around before the evolution of Homeric scholarship on the natural world traced above, though it has only recently been used to reread the ancient texts. Born out of a response to modern environmentalism in the latter half of the 20th century, the term "ecocriticism" was first coined by William Rueckert in his 1978 essay, "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism". According to recent scholars, ecocriticism is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment…ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies",[40] and "the widest definition of the subject of ecocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human' itself".[41] The aims of this new approach are: "to track environmental ideas and

[38] Holmes 2015.
[39] Holmes 2015: 33.
[40] Glotfelty 1996: xix.
[41] Garrard 2004: 5. For a more extensive and detailed view of the history of ecocriticism and how it has changed over time, see further Garrard 2004, Hiltner 2014, Zapf 2016.

representations wherever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place…in a great many cultural spaces", and "to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis",[42] Thus, we can see from these definitions how ecocriticism fits naturally as a method of the study of the natural world in the change in scholarship on the topic listed above. Not only is ecocriticism concerned with the representation of the natural world in literature and culture, but also with the very definition of the 'human' within these representations. As such, the work of Fenno, Purves, and Holmes discussed above chimes with this method of analysis, if not in name.

However, scholarship on ancient Greek and Roman literature has since emerged that takes as its central methodology ecocritical theory. Jill Da Silva's 2008 article, "Ecocriticism and Myth: The Case of Erysichthon", makes this connection clear not only from the title of her work, but in her opening claim and the questions that she proposes: "How well does this myth serve us today as an allegory, or parable, about humans' relationship with the natural world on which we ultimately depend? I shall argue that it is a myth particularly for our time, just as much as it was over 2,000 years ago for remarkably similar reasons, and that it demonstrates the enduring power of myth in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[43] Thus, in Da Silva's methodology we see how using ecocritical theory marks a shift in how scholars analyze and discuss the depiction of the human-environment relationship in ancient texts, foregrounding the connection between ancient and modern, and how the ancient text can be brought into relation and conversation with our own time. As stated above, ecocriticism

[42] Kerridge 1998: 5.
[43] Da Silva 2008: 103. Da Silva goes on to say: "I suggest that it has just as much relevance in discussing humans' worsening relationship with the natural world as it has rational explanation and facts and figures. In a postmodern age we can claim that not only does the Erysichthon story have equal relevance, but that also, in the light of the revelations of contemporary greener scientific discoveries, this myth has particular relevance."

originated officially together with the advent of modern environmentalism, and so was always inherently political, and thus concerned with action in the present day. Da Silva's article follows along these lines, drawing out the ways in which the myth of Erysichthon is a myth "particularly for our time", relevant in the ways that we view our own relationship with and impact on the environment.

The clearest indication of this shift—both a shift in scholarship and in the desire to use ecocritical theory to analyze ancient literature—is Christopher Schliephake's 2017 volume of essays, *Ecocriticism, Ecology, and the Cultures of Antiquity*.[44] With eighteen essays spread across various genres, from close readings of ancient texts to classical reception, Schliephake argues that the premodern and ancient world has heretofore been neglected in ecocritical exploration, often cited only as an "aside or footnote", and states that the volume "seeks to address this blind spot in our environmental epistemology and to pave the way for an integration of the cultures of antiquity into our current ecocritical theory and practice."[45] As with Da Silva's article, the volume seeks not only to reevaluate the *ancient* world in light of "present-day environmental concerns", but also to reconsider our own *contemporary* outlook on aspects of the non-human world through the ancient cultures.[46] While scholarship on the depiction of the natural, non-human world in ancient and Homeric studies has continued to evolve from this point, undergoing various permutations and introducing novel modes of analysis,[47] my own research in this dissertation settles on the boundary between scholarship that moves beyond the binary categories of "nature" and

[44] Schliephake (ed.) 2017.
[45] Schliephake 2017: 2-3.
[46] See also recently, for example, Brockliss 2019; Reitz-Joosse, Makins, Mackie (ed.s) 2021.
[47] One excellent example can be seen in Chesi and Spiegel (ed.s) 2020.

"culture"—identifying and analyzing the fluid, liminal spaces in texts wherein ontologies are porous and various living beings interact and intermingle—and a strictly ecocritical reading of ancient texts. I hope that a brief sketch of the landscape of modern scholarship on environmental aspects in ancient and Homeric studies has helped to orient the nature of the work herein among its influences and departures, with the latter discussed in much more detail in the Conclusion, once the arguments in the thesis have been laid bare.

Chapter 1

The Groans of Gaia: Epic Resonances and Cosmic Progress in the *Iliad*

Introduction

The figure of Gaia is in many ways a unique and complicated figure to think with when discussing the role and impact of the natural world in the *Iliad* of Homer. She is both a divinity and a tactile feature of the physical world, though she is never "embodied" in an anthropomorphic sense as are other divinities in the poem; she is always present, a witness to battle, death, and the politics of the human and divine worlds, yet she has no voice and takes no direct action; she is a "life-giving" source and also the final resting place of the dead. She paradoxically appears to be a silent feature of the background of the *Iliad*, a part of the setting that frames the action undertaken by the heroes of the narrative, much like the trees, the hills, the mountains, and the sea in the Trojan landscape, while also indirectly influencing action and at times moving the narrative of the poem forward.[48] In fact, as I will hope to show, Gaia is far from an insignificant figure in the poem's narrative, but is instead carefully and inextricably bound to the positioning of the *Iliad* within the wider epic tradition and signals the *Iliad*'s place in the tradition's cosmic history. The representation of Gaia provides a unique framework for analyzing the natural world and its connection to and interaction with the human. As such, this chapter will analyze the figure of Gaia in the Cyclic *Cypria*, in

[48] Pucci 2009, 45 speaks in a similar tone of Gaia in the *Theogony*: "she is both cause and effect of her self, and constantly dispossessed, for she is in whatever she creates and yet possesses nothing of what she creates. She has no assured identity."

Hesiod's *Theogony*, and finally in Homer's *Iliad*, in order to establish a framework within which to further analyze the depiction of the human-environment relationship in the *Iliad* in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Before moving forward, a word must be said about the nature of epic poetry, and song culture in ancient Greece in general, especially about the ways in which variant traditions can be seen to interact with one another. In thinking about the role of Gaia and associated images in the *Iliad* as engaging with the wider epic tradition, the concept of *epic resonance* is of central importance. As Graziosi and Haubold have discussed at length, the resonance of Homeric poetry is its "ability to evoke a wider epic tradition and place itself in that tradition".[49] This tradition is linked with the poetry of Hesiod and the *Epic Cycle*, all of which "share a vision of the cosmos and how it developed through time".[50] This "resonance" happens through epithets, genealogies, language, phraseology, imagery, motifs, all of which can "evoke a web of associations and implications by referring to the wider epic tradition".[51] The resonance of epic poetry is closely tied to what Foley refers to as "traditional referentiality",[52] the capacity for traditional phrases to evoke a larger context of traditional storytelling. This characteristic of ancient epic opens the genre to numerous potential readings and interpretations of many "traditional" scenes and motifs, both within and without the story they are featured in. For example, Graziosi and Haubold illustrate how the traditional epithet of Achilles, "swift-footed", can evoke larger patterns and associations with the hero within Homer's *Iliad*. Most of the stories associated with Achilles have to do with his quick feet, whether he is chasing Hector around the walls of Troy, is fated to be shot in

[49] Graziosi and Haubold 2005: 12.
[50] Graziosi and Haubold 2005: 8.
[51] Graziosi and Haubold 2005: 9.
[52] Foley 1999.

the heel by Apollo, or, by dissonance, he is immobile and unmoving, as he is in much of the *Iliad*. The traditional language of the epithet sets up an expectation for patterns of storytelling associated with Achilles—triggering a "chain of associations" in the minds of audiences and readers—that can then be either affirmed or denied, and therein create meaning.[53]

Recently, Barker and Christensen not only provide a useful introduction and comparison between resonance and traditional referentiality in relation to ancient epic song culture, but also discuss the benefits and pitfalls of other methodologies like allusion and intertextuality.[54] Regarding traditional referentiality, Barker and Christensen note that it "allows us to hear any and all units of utterance—the language, as well as the themes, type scenes and story patterns—of the specific poem-in-performance diachronically in and against past performances."[55] Thus, the poem accrues meaning in relation to other songs; that is, the emphasis is rather on the audience experience, and how the audience attributes meaning by listening for resonant units and patterns during performance. As such, there is no specific "target text" in the mind of the audience, who, depending on their expertise and experience, can draw to mind "any number of referents". In order to illustrate how each methodology plays out in interpreting and experiencing Homeric epic (I am most concerned with resonance and traditional referentiality for this chapter), Barker and Christensen turn to the traditional epithet of Achilles, "swift-footed", as Graziosi and Haubold before them. In the example of the epithet of Achilles, Barker and Christensen refer to an Attic black-figure kylix that depicts Achilles lying in wait and then pursuing Troilus and Polyxena, as a non-

[53] Graziosi and Haubold 2005: 51-55.
[54] Barker and Christensen 2020: 11-43.
[55] Barker and Christensen 2020: 35-6.

literary example of the static-then-swift-footed Achilles that may resonate with depictions of Achilles as stationary, and demonstrates the "broad scope of traditional referentiality".[56]

Thus, it is in the experience of the audience member that meaning-making will occur upon listening to, and reading, any given performance or text, and it is the audience member that will acknowledge certain resonant language, images, and patterns that extend beyond the present song—or text, or material object—and into the wider epic tradition. In this chapter I focus on the figure of Gaia in the *Iliad*, as well as specific language, imagery, and motifs that are associated with her, and trace the ways that these associations evoke a larger context of traditional storytelling found in Hesiod's *Theogony* and the Cyclic *Cypria*. While this would appear to foreclose what Barker and Christensen argue is the broad scope of traditional referentiality, I do so for two reasons: first, the *Theogony* and what we have left of the *Cypria* feature the figure of Gaia more prominently than other available ancient sources in the wider epic tradition, and so offer a greater opportunity to engage with associated material; and second, in order to limit the scope of the study of Gaia and focus more closely on the subject of the thesis, the Homeric *Iliad*. I acknowledge that there may very well be traditions outside of Hesiod and the *Cycle* that may resonate with the image of Gaia in Homer's *Iliad*—both literary and non-literary—but the present chapter seeks to identify the resonant patterns between the aforementioned traditions in focused detail.[57]

Gaia is a figure that is often overlooked when discussing the *Iliad*, perhaps because of the peculiar place she occupies in the poem as a goddess who is not quite a goddess, and as a fixture of the landscape that is not quite *just* a fixture of the landscape; more to the point, she

[56] Barker and Christensen 2020: 38.
[57] However, examining further ancient literary and non-literary sources that depict Gaia is of interest for a future project, discussed in more detail in the Conclusion.

is not an obvious major character of significance in Homer as she is in other narrative traditions (as in Hesiod, which we will discuss below). This chapter will argue that in Book 2 of the *Iliad* the figure of Gaia evokes critical moments in the cosmic history narrated in the wider epic tradition, especially as related in Hesiod's *Theogony*. These moments are critical in that they lead directly to the shaping of the future of the cosmos, and thus represent moments of cosmic progress in the poem: the severing of Uranus' genitals and his defeat, the defeat of the Titans and the ascension of Zeus to power, and the defeat of Typhoeus and so too the final physical threat to Zeus' reign over gods and men.

These moments are often marked, in the epic tradition outside of Homer, by cataclysmic devastation of the natural world and indirectly the conflagration of Gaia. I argue that the resonance of these events in Homer persists beyond Book 2 of the *Iliad*—where they are most explicitly evoked—and remains active throughout the entire narrative as indicated by the characterization of Gaia as well as the destruction of the natural world in both the similes and the narrative proper. As such, this resonance does not only place the *Iliad* in the wider epic tradition, but links the events of the poem to events in cosmic history that are uniquely significant and critical to continuity and progress, often by marking the end of one age and the beginning of another; in the case of Homer, the end of the generation of heroes. That is, when we read the simile of Typhoeus in the *Iliad* next to its Hesiodic counterpart and trace the similar language, imagery, and themes throughout the Homeric poem, we can reinterpret the role of the destruction of the natural world in Homer as signaling the collapse and end of the heroic age. Gaia is the harbinger of these critical moments, of new world orders: her chthonic groans compel change and her conflagration signals end and new beginnings.

The figure of Gaia in the passages of *Iliad* 2 (2.94-96 and 2.780-85) also sets up an apparently antithetical association, that of the Achaeans both as harmful to Gaia, who thus needs to be helped by means of their destruction, and as executors pf Zeus' "cosmic will", which entails the necessary defeat of Gaia. This seemingly antithetical characterization reflects the nature of the "*Dios boule*"[58] in that, although ultimately the Achaeans will win the war and decimate the Trojan world, in order to appease Thetis and Achilles and fulfil his promise to them, Zeus must first kill many Achaeans in turn. This duality inherent in the figure of Gaia—of life and death, of subject and object, of continuity and cessation—is a quality that is unique to the goddess of the earth.

However, thinking about Gaia provides further modes of analyzing the natural world in the poem beyond the cosmic link to the wider epic tradition. When we associate the devastation of the natural world to events in cosmic history (in particular the burning of trees, earth, and water), the natural world in the *Iliad* is revealed to be, like Gaia, not just a silent backdrop. As I will argue in subsequent chapters, it is only through an analysis of Gaia that we can see that the natural world in the poem is closely tied both to the characterization of Trojans and Achaeans, and to the depiction of the human-environment relationship on a temporal scale: past, present, and future. In this way the natural world in the *Iliad* can be seen with a quality of timelessness that not only looks forward from the events of the poem, but also, crucially, projects backwards into the past of mythological time and space. Thus, in each of these moments is an entire microcosm of time and space, of history, of past, present, and future.

[58] A discussion of which see more below.

Gaia in the Cypria

It will be instructive first to provide a brief overview of Gaia in the wider epic tradition before turning to her role in the *Iliad*, underscoring in particular certain language, imagery, and characteristics that will be especially resonant with the Homeric poem. I begin with the *Cycle*'s *Cypria*. The evidence we have is fragmentary, but the figure of Gaia features significantly. The dating of when the fragmentary *Cycle* was put together is not certain, as is the authorship of the poems.[59] However, what is significant for this study is not so much the dating and authorship of the fragmentary poems, but rather that the *Cycle* was considered to be a part of the wider epic tradition within which the Homeric poems—the stories they tell—existed. That is, it is important to note that the Cyclic *Cypria*, in this case, would have been a story whose themes, characters, and plot could be engaged in the meaning-making of an audience experiencing the Homeric poems (in particular, the *Iliad*). The elements contained in the *Cycle* are generally considered to be a part of this epic tradition, and reflect archaic notions about the "overall sequence of events in the heroic age".[60] The fragment of the *Cypria*, contained in a D Scholion to *Iliad* 1.5, states:

> ἦν ὅτε μυρία φῦλα κατὰ χθόνα πλαζόμενα <αἰεί
> ἀνθρώπων ἐ>βάρυ<νε βαθυ>στέρνου πλάτος αἴης.
> Ζεὺς δὲ ἰδὼν ἐλέησε, καὶ ἐν πυκιναῖς πραπίδεσσιν
> κουφίσαι ἀνθρώπων παμβώτορα σύνθετο γαῖαν,
> ῥιπίσσας πολέμου μεγάλην ἔριν Ἰλιακοῖο, 5
> ὄφρα κενώσειεν θανάτωι βάρος. οἳ δ᾽ ἐνὶ Τροίηι
> ἥρωες κτείνοντο, Διὸς δ᾽ ἐτελείετο βουλή.

[59] Attempts for which see Burgess 2001, Davies 2001, and West 2013.
[60] Graziosi and Haubold 2005: 38-9. See also Griffin 2001.

> Once upon a time the countless tribes <of mortals thronging about weighed down> the broad surface of the deep-bosomed earth. And Zeus, seeing this, took pity, and in his cunning mind he devised a plan to lighten the burden caused by mankind from the face of the all-nourishing earth, by fanning into flame the great strife that was the Trojan War, in order to alleviate the earth's burden by means of the death of men. So it was that the heroes were killed in the battle at Troy and the will of Zeus was accomplished.
>
> West 2013, F 1 Sch. (D) Il. 1.5.

Note two actions in this fragment: (1) Human beings "weigh down" (ἐ>βάρυ<νε) Aia, the earth; and (2) Zeus, pitying Earth, seeks to "lighten" (κουφίσαι) her by means of humankind's "death" (θανάτωι) in the Trojan war. This tradition has been the site of scholarly interest for some time, the obvious link to the opening of the *Iliad* in the line "and the will of Zeus was accomplished" (Διὸς δ᾽ ἐτελείετο βουλή) sparking a rich vein of scholarship into the question of what exactly the will of Zeus is (to which we will return later in the chapter). For now, let us focus instead on the two actions stated above in fragment 1. The burden of humankind and the general weight on and "stuffiness" of Gaia is a theme that will recur in Hesiod and Homer, as will the theme of the generation of heroes dying in the Trojan war (and the Theban wars before that). Of interest here is also Zeus as helper to Gaia, pitying her in her distress. Like the theme of burden before, the theme of aid for Gaia in her pain will emerge in Hesiod and, through resonance, in Homer.

The resonance of these moments can be more clearly seen in a comparison between Hesiod and Homer, seeing as the language used—in particular the verb *stenachizo* and

cataclysmic descriptions like the burning of trees and the boiling of rivers—is similar and in some cases identical. This is not the case in the *Cypria*, though the idea is the same: Gaia, weighed down by a burden, needs to find relief through a "lightening" or "emptying" (κενώσειεν) of that burden. There is here a burden of human life upon the earth that is remedied by depopulation through war that is enacted by Zeus' cosmic will. Keeping these motifs in mind, let us now turn to Gaia in Hesiod.

Gaia in Hesiod's Theogony

Gaia in Hesiod's *Theogony* is active from the birth of the cosmos to the very end of the establishment of Zeus' ultimate reign over gods and men.[61] Following upon the themes we just considered in fragment 1 of the *Cypria*, let us turn to the first moment of conflict in Hesiod's poem, the "non-birth" of the generation of Titans, the children of Gaia and Uranus. Uranus earns the hatred of all his children because as soon as any child was born he "hid it in Gaia's womb and did not let it return to the light" (*Th.* 154-58). In response:

> ἣ δ᾽ ἐντὸς στοναχίζετο Γαῖα πελώρη
> στεινομένη, δολίην δὲ κακήν τ᾽ ἐφράσσατο τέχνην.[62] 160
>
> Huge Gaia groaned (stonachizeto) within herself,
> being burdened/full (steinomene), she devised a tricky and wicked design.[63]
> *Th.* 159-60.

[61] Pucci 2009, 45: "she embodies the energy that animates all the stories."
[62] All Greek from Hesiod's *Theogony* is taken from Merkelbach and West 1990.
[63] English translations of the *Theogony* are taken from Evelyn-White 1977, with modification.

We see again the theme of "burden" for Gaia, this time the physical burden of her children being stuffed inside of her womb, expressed by the verb *steino*. Her distress is marked by the audible verb *stonachizo*, to "groan". This episode marks what I refer to as a "critical moment" in the progress of cosmic history in the wider epic tradition; that is to say, the toppling of one world order for a new one.

In her pain, Gaia devises a δολίην…κακήν…τέχνην: she creates an iron sickle asking her children to help her punish their father's "wicked outrage". Cronus agrees to help his mother and severs Uranus' genitals as he lay atop Gaia, thus freeing his brothers and sisters, and, notably, *relieving* Gaia of her burden and distress. As a result, Uranus calls the generation of Cronus the Titanes, the "overreachers", for they have committed a *mega ergon* with recklessness. This mega ergon is the toppling of one cosmic order and the establishment of another: the generation of Titans.

As in the *Cypria*, again we see Gaia weighed down by a physical burden, this time instead of an *external* overpopulation of human life, it is the *internal* burden of her divine children who are stuffed back into her womb as soon as they are born. As in the *Cypria*, there is a plan in place to alleviate this burden, but instead of Zeus devising a plan, it is Gaia herself, and instead of the *death* of humankind, it is the *birth* of gods that relieves the goddess. Already we see surfacing contradicting dualities around the figure of Gaia: internal and external, birth and death. We will discuss these dualities further in the final section of this chapter, seeing as the figure of Gaia continues to be associated with such contradicting ideas as these. Important to note for now is that the theme of burden and relief emerges as a cyclical motif, one that will engage with another cyclical motif in the conflagration of Gaia herself. Before moving on to two further critical moments in the *Theogony*, we may note

Gaia's role as an instigator of cosmic progress[64] throughout the poem, as here she instigates the plot that overthrows Uranus and allows the generation of Titans to emerge.

Gaia's role in the *Theogony* as an instigator of cosmic progress continues in successive generations until Zeus' ultimate rule is established. After the plot to sever Uranus' genitals, Gaia and Uranus help their daughter Rheia give birth to Zeus, Rheia's last-born child with Cronus, and carry him away to be raised in secret, avoiding the fate of his other siblings who were swallowed by their father. In a year's time, when Zeus is fully grown, it is Gaia again who convinces Cronus to disgorge his children, thus setting the stage for the intergenerational conflict between Titans and Olympians. On Gaia's advice (*Th*. 626-28), Zeus and the other immortal gods on his side bring the "one-hundred-handers", sons of Uranus and Gaia, up from Tartarus to help win the war against the Titans. Again, after Zeus and the other gods defeat the Titans, it is on Gaia's advice that the gods urge Zeus to become their ruler (*Th*. 883-85), and finally, once his rule has been established, it is again on Uranus' and Gaia's advice that Zeus swallows his pregnant wife Metis who was foretold to bear a son that was "destined to rule over gods and men" (*Th*. 888-98). Thus, Gaia plays a pivotal role in the progress of cosmic history up until the stable rule of Zeus over gods and men both directly and indirectly. This unique characteristic of hers as a crux for major generational change and the establishment of new world orders may seep into her role in the cyclic *Cypria* as we saw earlier, her pain prompting Zeus to devise the Trojan war in order to depopulate the earth and bring Gaia relief. I will argue that this characteristic is precisely what is being evoked in Book 2 of the *Iliad*, but first let us look more closely at two of these critical

[64] Strauss Clay 2003: 25-26; 2020, 135: "She [Gaia] has always promoted progress and change…"

moments in the *Theogony* wherein massive environmental destruction and the conflagration of Gaia are suffered during the toppling and suppression of intergenerational threats to Zeus.

I have already looked at the role Gaia plays in helping Zeus and his fellow gods defeat Cronus and the generation of Titans in the *Titanomachy*, from helping Rheia trick Cronus and raising Zeus, to advising Zeus on the importance of an alliance with the "one-hundred-handers", and finally prompting the gods to elect Zeus as their new ruler. But another crucial aspect of this war is the immense environmental collateral damage that takes place during, in particular, Zeus' entry into battle. After the Titans and the one-hundred-handers engage in battle creating a massive din across the sea, earth, and sky (*Th*. 678-86), the clamor reaching both Tartarus and the high aether, Zeus descends from Olympus wielding thunder and lightning, and a divine conflagration takes place:

> ἀμφὶ δὲ γαῖα φερέσβιος ἐσμαράγιζε
> καιομένη, λάκε δ᾽ ἀμφὶ πυρὶ μεγάλ᾽ ἄσπετος ὕλη.
> ἔζεε δὲ χθὼν πᾶσα καὶ Ὠκεανοῖο ῥέεθρα 695
> πόντος τ᾽ ἀτρύγετος…
>
> The life-giving earth (Gaia) burned and resounded all over,
> and the vast forest crackled, consumed by fire.
> The whole earth (chthon pasa) boiled and the streams of Ocean
> and the barren sea...
>
> *Th*. 693-96.

In his effort to decimate the generation of Titans, Zeus sets the entire world on fire: Gaia, the forests, and the waters of Ocean and Sea. The entire world, *chthon pasa*, boils in fire.[65] I

[65] Pucci 2009, 62-3: Gaia "roars as she is burnt"; the scene "shows turmoil, disaster, and pain of the cosmic elements" as a consequence of the gods' battle.

suggest that this apocalyptic conflagration, which accompanies this critical moment in cosmic history, signals the collapse of, in this case, the old generation of Titans, and ushers in the new world order of Zeus and the Olympians.

The *Titanomachy* is one of only two battles that Zeus engages in throughout the *Theogony,* the second being the battle with Typhoeus, which we will discuss shortly. The defeat of the generation of Titans and the establishment of Zeus' new world order is marked by setting the world on fire, a symbol of the power that Zeus alone possesses: lightning.[66] In the previous critical moment in cosmic history that we discussed, the severing of Uranus' genitals, there was no conflagration and no battle as such, and this, I suggest, is because there was as yet no lightning/fire in existence, according to the *Theogony*'s timeline, and no Zeus yet born to wield it. The use of lightning and fire is unique to Zeus and representative of not only his physical might, but of his ability to effect change on a cosmic scale as well as being instrumental in his own cosmic progress,[67] as we will see in his defeat of Typhoeus.

We have discussed Gaia as an instigator of cosmic progress and as an asset to Zeus in establishing himself as the ruler of gods and men, but she also presents him with his most formidable threat: her and Tartarus' child Typhoeus, who the narrator tells us "would have become lord over gods and men" if Zeus were not so watchful (*Th*. 837-39). It is significant to note that there is no intention on Gaia's part to upend Zeus or his rule, but perhaps it is in her nature, as we have seen, to be involved, however indirectly, in moments of critical importance to the history of the cosmos. As such, just as in the *Titanomachy*, Gaia will end up as collateral damage in Zeus' decimation of Typhoeus, and the entire earth will be set on

[66] Strauss Clay 2020, 138 notes that fire is first hidden within Gaia, which the Giants then give a share of to Zeus as a gift.
[67] Mackie 2008, 155: "The ultimate hegemony of Zeus and the Olympians is won by the force of fire."

fire again. Although Gaia helps Zeus with the Titans and does not directly oppose him with her son Typhoeus, it is as if her ancient authority and influence throughout the history of the cosmos demands that Zeus continually set her on fire.

As in the *Titanomachy*, Zeus first announces his presence in the battle through sound: thunder reverberates through Gaia, sky, sea, Ocean, and Tartarus (*Th*. 840-41). As he strides down Olympus, his steps shaking the mountain's very foundations, Gaia groans underneath his immortal feet, *epestenachize de gaia* (*Th*. 843). This is the same verb—with a slightly different vocalism and compounded with a preposition—we saw used of Gaia in her distress at Uranus stuffing her children back inside her womb (*Th*. 158), and I will argue that phrases that combine the noun Gaia with a form of *ston-/stenachizo* are a key element for the resonance of Gaia with the wider epic tradition in Book 2 of the *Iliad*. For now, this phrase signals yet another critical moment in cosmic history with the defeat of Typhoeus. After the intended target, Typhoeus, is struck by Zeus' lightning and thunder, we are told that "the whole earth boiled, the sky and the sea" (*Th*. 847), the same phrase used in the defeat of the generation of Titans above (*Th*. 695). After Zeus sets fire to all his heads, Typhoeus collapses, and beneath him "huge Gaia groaned", *stenachize de Gaia pelore* (*Th*. 858). The distress of Gaia frames the beginning and end of the battle: she announces Zeus' descent from Olympus, and the collapse of Typhoeus upon her. But even so, this critical moment in cosmic history is marked once again by conflagration and cataclysmic destruction of the natural world:

> φλὸξ δὲ κεραυνωθέντος ἀπέσσυτο τοῖο ἄνακτος
> οὔρεος ἐν βήσσῃσιν ἀιδνῇς παιπαλοέσσῃς, 860
> πληγέντος. πολλὴ δὲ πελώρη καίετο γαῖα

ἀτμῇ θεσπεσίῃ καὶ ἐτήκετο κασσίτερος ὡς…
…
ὣς ἄρα τήκετο γαῖα σέλαι πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο.

The flame from the thunder-smitten lord
leapt along the dark and rocky woodlands
of the mountain, and the infernal blasts of the flames
set much of the giant earth on fire until it melted like tin...
...
So melted the earth from the flash of the burning fire.

Th. 859-63, 867.[68]

Gaia and the greater natural world again become collateral damage in a conflict of cosmic significance.[69] The world is set on fire by lightning that seems to leap unrestrained from the body of Typhoeus, lightning from Zeus that reflects their master's power and influence upon the cosmos.

The recurring language and imagery in these three critical moments in cosmic history in Hesiod's *Theogony* are evoked in the *Iliad*, where we turn shortly, and present an opportunity for reinterpreting Gaia and the depiction of the destruction of the natural world in Homer's epic poem. The nature of Gaia as an agent of cosmic change, as a disrupter of world orders, and as the site upon which conflagration and the devastation of the natural world signal a moment of collapse of what has been or could be and the emergence of a new cosmic order (or the preservation of one), designates her as a pivotal actant within the framework of

[68] Strauss Clay 2020, 137: "As previously in the Titanomachy, all parts of the cosmos are blanketed in a universal conflagration."
[69] Pucci 2009, 66: "Surprisingly, the description of the fight does not end with the celebration of Zeus' victory, but with the depiction of Gaia's defeat and destruction." So too Strauss Clay 2020, 139: "The defeat of Typhoeus is simultaneously the defeat of the earth."

the history of the cosmos. When we read the simile of Typhoeus in Book 2 of the *Iliad* next to its Hesiodic (and Cyclic) counterpart and trace the similar language, imagery, and themes throughout the Homeric poem, we can nuance our understanding of the role of the natural world in Homer, and in particular its destruction, as signaling the collapse and end of the heroic age. Gaia is the catalyst of this new world order: her chthonic groans announce a moment of significance and her conflagration signals cessation and continuity. When Gaia groans, the universe demands action and insists upon progress, both of which are announced by the element of fire.[70]

Gaia in the Iliad: *The Burden of Achaean Life*

Let us turn to Gaia in the Homeric *Iliad*, in particular her presence in Book 2. At the end of *Iliad* 1 and the beginning of Book 2, Zeus ponders how he might fulfil his promise to Thetis and bring honor to Achilles by putting strength into the Trojans until the Achaeans restore to Achilles his honor. Zeus decides to send the god Dream to Agamemnon in his sleep with a false message: now Agamemnon and the Achaeans may take the city of Troy since the gods have been won over by Hera and they no longer protect the Trojan people (*Iliad* 2.8-15).[71] Upon waking Agamemnon arms himself and, after gathering a meeting of his high-ranking soldiers, discloses to them his dream. He goes on to say that, instead of revealing this dream to the entire army with the (apparent) surety from the gods that the

[70] Strauss Clay 2020, 138 notes that an element of subterranean fire, a primordial possession of Gaia which the Giants give to Zeus, "characterizes the fiery nature of her final offspring", Typhoeus. While this in itself can be seen as an attempt at cosmic change and initiative, I prefer to see the element of fire remain within the figure of Gaia even after the birth of Typhoeus and the "defeat" of the earth, thus characterizing Gaia's action beyond the Hesiodic tradition.

[71] On Agamemnon's false dream, see Reid 1973.

Achaeans can now at last take the Trojan citadel, he will instead test his army's resolve by falsely stating that the citadel will *never* be taken, that the expedition has been a complete disaster, and that they should pack their ships and sail home (*Iliad* 2.72-75).[72]

The Achaean kings lead their respective units into assembly to listen to Agamemnon's speech. Here is where we first encounter Gaia. As the entire army gathers, we are told in *Iliad* 2.94-96:

> …οἳ δ' ἀγέροντο
> τετρήχει δ' ἀγορή, ὑπὸ δὲ στεναχίζετο γαῖα 95
> λαῶν ἱζόντων, ὅμαδος δ' ἦν.
>
> …Thus they were assembled
> And the place of their assembly was shaken and Gaia groaned
> Beneath the people taking their seats and there was a tumult.
>
> *Il*. 2.94-96.

The verb used for Gaia's groan is *hupo…stenachizo*, the same verb used three times in Hesiod's *Theogony* as we discussed above: (1) for Gaia's distress at her children being stuffed back inside of her by Uranus, (2) beneath the weight of Zeus' feet as he enters the battle with the generation of the Titans, and (3) beneath the weight of the fall of Typhoeus upon her. The context of this moment, or rather, the cause of the groan that Gaia gives forth, is relatively straightforward: the entire Achaean army has gathered together in one place, their combined weight placing an excessive physical burden upon the earth,[73] echoing what

[72] On Agamemnon's test, see Knox 1989; Cook 2003; Christensen 2015, with bibliography therein on treatments of Agamemnon's speech and efficacy—and failure—as a speaker.
[73] Kirk 1984, 126: "and the earth groaned as they sat down, presumably at their weight and haste rather than at the din, ὅμαδος, they were making—the phrase occurs in a more natural context as the whole Achaean army advances at 784." Thus, Kirk notes the presence of Gaia, but not the link to the wider tradition.

we saw in the *Cypria* above. Of course, what will soon follow in the remainder of *Iliad* 2 is the famous, laborious, catalogue of ships, further underscoring the sheer number of human bodies in the Achaean army.

Not only does the use of the same language for Gaia groaning evoke the Hesiodic parallels, but the theme of burden placed upon Gaia is one we see in Hesiod and the fragmentary *Cypria*. As discussed above, the fragment relates an alternate tradition for the beginning of the Trojan war: Gaia was weighed down by so many human lives that Zeus, taking pity on her, sought to *lighten* and *alleviate* this burden upon her by "fanning into flame" the Trojan war so that many men should perish. Taking the wider epic tradition into consideration, this seemingly innocuous line in the *Iliad* becomes a startling and ominous warning for the Achaean army. When we have seen Gaia being overburdened or hear her utter a groan of distress, two things can happen: either that burden is eliminated, or there is massive environmental devastation about to ensue.

In the *Cypria* the removal of this burden happens through warfare and death. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, the burden of children stuffed into Gaia's womb is removed through Cronus agreeing to Gaia's plan to sever Uranus' genitals. In this light, we may consider that the Achaeans are due to be "removed" as well. Of course, that the fragment of the *Cypria* deals with the Trojan war, as does the *Iliad*, suggests that, as in the *Cypria*, the *Iliad* will also remove the burden of Achaean bodies upon Gaia through their death in war. In fact, this is what I suggest is the case for this particular instance of Gaia's groan. However, this becomes a bit more complicated by what immediately follows: the Achaean army believe Agamemnon's testing speech that they should sail home and forget the war, and they all prepare to leave Troy. As they disperse from the assembly, the dust beneath their feet "lifted

and rose high" (*Iliad* 2.150-51), and their shouts "hit the sky" (*Iliad* 2.153). The juxtaposition of burden weighing down the earth and the dust and shouts of the army as they prepare to leave the Trojan land hitting the sky puts forth a less drastic lightening of Gaia's burden. That is, if the Achaeans well and truly left Troy at this moment, Gaia's burden, which caused her to groan beneath its weight, would be alleviated and the death of Achaeans would thus not be necessary.[74]

This of course is not the case. Through Hera's intervention, Athena and Odysseus stop the Achaeans from reaching a "homecoming beyond fate" (*Iliad* 2.155) through speeches delivered by Odysseus and Nestor to the Achaean army. Thus, the groan of Gaia beneath the combined weight of the assembled Achaean army suggests to us, when taken together with those similar moments in the wider epic tradition, that aid will come to Gaia for the removal of her burden in the form of the death of the Achaeans. Moreover, this closely aligns with Zeus' plan to bring honor to Achilles as told in the opening lines of Book 2:

> …Δία δ᾽ οὐκ ἔχε νήδυμος ὕπνος,
> ἀλλ᾽ ὅ γε μερμήριζε κατὰ φρένα ὡς Ἀχιλῆα
> τιμήσῃ, ὀλέσῃ δὲ πολέας ἐπὶ νηυσὶν Ἀχαιῶν.
>
> …but the ease of sleep came not upon Zeus
> Who was pondering in his heart how he might bring honor
> To Achilles, *and destroy many beside the ships of the Achaeans*.
>
> *Il.* 2.2-4.

As such, the plan of Zeus—discussed in the next section—to kill many Achaeans and the potential consequences of Gaia's groan beneath the weight of the Achaean army overlap.

[74] Christensen 2015, 71-2 enumerates the reasons why Agamemnon's speech is so persuasive for his men, and ultimately successful.

What I have earlier called "critical moments" in cosmic history as seen in Hesiod's *Theogony* and marked by Gaia's groan, moments that signal a cosmic shift, generational change, or new world order, can also be applied here. The will of Zeus, a will that has been seen to be unstoppable in the face of cosmic progress as related in the *Theogony*, is here equal to Gaia's distress. But this consequence alone, the potential death of Achaeans, seems to fall just short of the immensity of generational and cosmic shifts we see in Hesiod with the defeat of Uranus, the generation of Titans, and Zeus' suppression of a final threat to his authority in Typhoeus. It is the reference to the last child of Gaia and Tartarus, however, that elevates the narrative of Homer's *Iliad* to that of a critical moment in cosmic history as seen in the wider epic tradition, where we now turn.

The Simile of Typhoeus: Zeus' Cosmic Will Reenacted

After the army reconvenes and Agamemnon, Athena, and the other Achaean kings marshal the army, battle becomes "sweeter to them than to go back/in their hollow ships to the beloved land of their fathers" (*Iliad* 2.453-54).[75] The first simile used of the army, which sets off a chain of four similes involving birds, insects, and goatherds, is as follows:

> ἠΰτε πῦρ ἀΐδηλον ἐπιφλέγει ἄσπετον ὕλην
> οὔρεος ἐν κορυφῇς, ἔκαθεν δέ τε φαίνεται αὐγή,
> ὣς τῶν ἐρχομένων ἀπὸ χαλκοῦ θεσπεσίοιο
> αἴγλη παμφανόωσα δι᾽ αἰθέρος οὐρανὸν ἷκε.
>
> As obliterating fire lights up a vast forest

[75] See Thalmann 2015 on the problem of violence in the *Iliad* in the face of the potential for peace.

Along the crests of the mountain, and the flare shows far off,
So as they marched, from the magnificent bronze the gleam went
Dazzling all about through the upper air to the heaven.

Il. 2.455-58.

Fire is used often and in a variety of contexts in the poem, which we will discuss at length in Chapter 3, but for now we might make note of its particular association to the Achaeans and their army. Fire and conflagration, as I have put forth earlier, are symbols that accompany critical moments in cosmic history. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Gaia, trees, Ocean, and Sea are often set ablaze during these moments: during the defeat of the generation of Titans and that of Typhoeus (*Th.* 693-96, 859-67). Both of these moments are also accompanied by Gaia's groan. Here the image of fire is used to describe the brilliant gleam of the Achaean army's bronze armor and weapons, with the association of destruction and devastation inherent in the image presented: obliterating fire through a forest. On their own, an image of the devastation of the natural world, the burning of a forest in a mountain, or the description of Gaia groaning may not be viewed as signals of cosmic significance in the *Iliad*. However, the many and recurring instances of these phenomena paired together with more acute resonances with the wider epic tradition, like the defeat of Typhoeus at the hands of Zeus, do suggest a closer connection.

After the narrator recounts the Achaean catalogue of ships and tells also who was "the best and bravest" of the Achaean men and horses (*Iliad* 2.484-779), the army advances:

οἳ δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἴσαν ὡς εἴ τε πυρὶ χθὼν πᾶσα νέμοιτο, 780
γαῖα δ᾽ ὑπεστενάχιζε Διὶ ὣς τερπικεραύνῳ
χωομένῳ ὅτε τ᾽ ἀμφὶ Τυφωέϊ γαῖαν ἰμάσσῃ
εἰν Ἀρίμοις, ὅθι φασὶ Τυφωέος ἔμμεναι εὐνάς.

ὣς ἄρα τῶν ὑπὸ ποσσὶ μέγα στεναχίζετο γαῖα
ἐρχομένων, μάλα δ᾽ ὦκα διέπρησσον πεδίοιο. 785

But the rest went forward, as if all the earth with flame were eaten,
And Gaia groaned under them, as if Zeus who delights in thunder
Were angry, as when he batters Gaia about Typhoeus,
In the land of the Arimoi, where they say Typhoeus lies prostrate.
Thus beneath their feet Gaia groaned loudly
To men marching, who made their way through the plain in great speed.
Il. 2.780-85.[76]

As we saw Gaia groan earlier in Book 2 under the weight of the Achaean army gathered together for the first time, here again she groans, with the same verb used elsewhere (*hupo* + *stenachizo*), just after a thorough review of the army highlights the sheer amount of *Achaean* physical bodies present and gathered together. Still before this, the army advances "as if all the earth were eaten by fire". The image of the entire earth set ablaze recalls the moments in Hesiod's *Theogony* where this conflagration takes place: during Zeus' entry into the Titanomachy, and after the defeat of Typhoeus at the hands of Zeus. This image links closely to the simile used for the Achaean army we saw previously where they are again compared to fire.

If the first passage we considered, where Gaia groans under the weight of the gathered army, raised the possibility that the Achaean burden would be removed through death, this second episode, which contains Gaia's groan *and* an image of Gaia in flames, and is further preceded by another simile where the Achaeans are compared to an obliterating fire

[76] Kirk 1984, 243: "Here the earth groans as when Zeus lashes it in anger around Typhoeus, which probably implies in an earthquake." Kirk notes the connections to the *Theogony*. In general, scholarship has not made much of this passage and how it fits into the immediate and wider context of the *Iliad*, informed by the wider tradition.

in a vast forest, presents on first consideration a different outcome. In the earlier gathering of the army our impression is that, based on the context of resonance within that moment—evoking the narratives of Gaia in the *Cypria* and the *Theogony*—Gaia is in distress and needs help lightening her burden. This fits not only with Zeus' plan in the poem to kill Achaeans until Achilles is honored by them, but also with parallel accounts in the wider epic tradition as we saw in the Cyclic *Cypria* and Hesiod's *Theogony*. In the arming of the Achaeans, however, there already seems to be a new association at play: soldiers as a devastating fire, and Gaia at risk of being set ablaze. This also coincides with one of the main characteristics of Gaia in Hesiod, namely, her being a site of conflagration in moments of cosmic change. That said, it is the ensuing simile of Typhoeus, I argue, that crucially elevates the narrative as told in the *Iliad* to a critical moment in cosmic history that not only places the Homeric poem firmly within the cosmic history of the wider epic tradition, but does so by also closely weaving the language, images, and themes we have been analyzing with the characters and narrative structure of the *Iliad*.

Gaia groans beneath the marching army of Achaeans "as if Zeus who delights in thunder were angry,/as when he batters Gaia about Typhoeus…" (*Iliad* 2.781-2). There are three points to consider here: (1) the anger of Zeus and his will, (2) the presence of Typhoeus, and (3) the collateral damage to Gaia in Zeus' punishment of Typhoeus. The fact that we have in these five lines already the image of Gaia in flames, the groans of Gaia, and now the presence of angered Zeus, further reinforces this episode as one that resonates with the critical moments we have been taking into consideration. The reference to Typhoeus similarly resonates with these critical moments, in particular with the scene narrated in Hesiod's *Theogony* where Zeus defeats Typhoeus with lightning and fire and prevents him

from becoming "lord over gods and men" (*Th*. 837). This episode, as we recall, *is* a critical moment wherein exists the potential for generational change and a new world order. While Typhoeus is ultimately defeated and Zeus and the Olympians establish their unending rule, this scene also entails the "defeat", in a sense, of Gaia.

We have spoken of Gaia as an eminent entity that receives aid when she is overburdened, a constant presence in moments of cosmic shift, and as an ancient power that threatens Zeus, however indirectly, and must be quelled through fire. This simile in *Iliad* 2 evokes a very specific episode narrated in Hesiod's *Theogony*, not only the defeat of Typhoeus, but the conflagration of Gaia. The devastation of the natural world, especially through fire, resonates with moments of upheaval and generational change in the wider epic tradition and cosmic time. These moments signal a new world order and an end to the status quo, another ominous image of what may come for Trojans and Achaeans who are just about to commence fighting in the narrative time of the *Iliad*.

There are two more points to make on the final line of the similes just discussed. Before the narrator turns at last to the Trojan side and to their own review of army and allies, we finish the above simile in *Iliad* 2.784-85:

> ὣς ἄρα τῶν ὑπὸ ποσσὶ μέγα στεναχίζετο γαῖα
> ἐρχομένων, μάλα δ᾽ ὦκα διέπρησσον πεδίοιο. 785
>
> Thus beneath their feet Gaia groaned loudly
> To men marching, who made their way through the plain in great speed.
> *Il*. 2.784-85.

First, the simile of Typhoeus is framed by the groans of Gaia in 2.781 and now in 2.784, and again, the same verb is used. This neatly demarcates these six lines for an analysis of the impact of this recurring theme and language of Gaia in distress and her audible groans. Coincidentally, Gaia here groans, specifically, beneath the feet of the Achaean soldiers who are on their way to battle. In *Theogony* 842-43, Gaia groans (*epestenachize*) "beneath the immortal feet" of Zeus descending from Olympus on his way to defeat Typhoeus. What ensues, of course, is the decimation of Typhoeus and the conflagration of Gaia. This brings me to my second and final observation about these lines, namely, that the Achaeans represent here the will and plan of Zeus.

Where in their earlier gathering the Achaeans represented the burden upon Gaia that must be alleviated, now the Achaeans represent the fire and lightning of Zeus set to devastate the natural world; the god's cosmic will upon history.[77] I argue *both* that the Achaeans represent the burden that must be lightened through death, *and* that they act as the executors of Zeus' will. The complex nature of the will and plan of Zeus in the *Iliad*, reflected here in the double association of the Achaeans, has been the site of scholarly debate. As Lynn-George asks, "what is the plan of Zeus? We are not told."[78] The indefiniteness of the plan of Zeus as stated in the proem of the *Iliad* (*Il*. 1.5) has garnered different responses. Lynn-George continues, saying that the plan introduces us to a "world predetermined by a divine design", that nevertheless is shown to be open to change throughout the poem's narrative.[79] This openness to change manifests even in the various interpretations of the plan in modern

[77] Mackie 2008, 155: "The ultimate hegemony of Zeus and the Olympians is won by the force of fire."
[78] Lynn-George 1988: 38.
[79] Lynn-George 1988: 39-41.

scholarship itself.[80] Thus, the plan of Zeus has been interpreted as the promise Zeus makes to Thetis to honor Achilles and kill the Achaeans, as the ultimate destruction of Troy, as the death of the generation of heroes, and as a plan that is, as expressed by Lynn-George above, not a concrete plan at all.[81] As such, my reading of the Achaeans in relation to Gaia is informed by interpretations of the will and plan of Zeus that view the god's plan as finding fulfilment both within the events of the *Iliad* and without; taking as a frame the cosmic backdrop which the figure of Gaia and her traditional associations in *Iliad* 2 evoke, the double role of the Achaeans comes into view.

In this simile the Achaeans are the ones who batter Gaia around Typhoeus and cause Gaia, and the trees of the forest, to be set ablaze. This juxtaposition—of the Achaeans as both burden and destroyers—can be explained in two ways. First, these competing representations reflect the plan of Zeus in the narrative time of the *Iliad*. One interpretation of the will and plan of Zeus in the poem is for Achilles to be honored and, ultimately, for the Achaeans to win the war and the Trojans to be defeated. But in order to achieve that end, many Achaeans must first be killed. Thus, the Achaeans are a burden that must be alleviated (in the short term), but also the executors of Zeus' will (upon Achilles' reentry into battle, and the long-term outcome of the Trojan war). Furthermore (and this will be discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3), on the narrative level of the *Iliad*, the Trojans come to stand for the natural world, while the Achaeans are closely tied to fire and the devastation of that same natural world.

Second, apart from the narrative level of the *Iliad*, the resonance of the wider epic tradition also imposes itself upon the poem. Thus, the events of the poem are marked, from

[80] Wilson 2007, 152-53 suggests that through the plan of Zeus, Homer both affirms his membership in the tradition of epic (as seen in the passage of the *Cypria*), and alters the plan "to fit his own story". Thus also Redfield 1979. Strauss Clay 1999 provides a bibliography and list of positions on the topic, ancient and modern.
[81] Strauss Clay 1999.

the time of the referencing of Typhoeus and all the parallels to cosmic history we have seen, as a critical moment in that history, a moment of generational change: the end of the generation of heroes. As such, the devastation and conflagration of the natural world not only stand for the death of Trojans and their world, but, on a cosmic level, for the end of the age of heroes. This imagery persists throughout the narrative of the poem, culminating in a movement from figural devastation and conflagration of the natural world to its enactment: from the similes to narrative action.

Gaia groans and needs to be helped, is often harmed in the process, and always perpetuates cosmic progress. Taking into consideration the resonances within the wider epic tradition, we can reread the imagery of devastation and conflagration of the natural world in the *Iliad*. Cosmic history is reenacted in the Homeric poem, though nuanced and sculpted to the needs of the epic narrative. As the catalogue of ships restarts, in a sense, and replays the beginning of the Trojan war,[82] so too does the simile of Typhoeus reenact and replay the Hesiodic cosmic action and progress of a Zeus-led Olympian order upon the Iliadic narrative. The presence of Gaia, her audible groans, and the conflagration and devastation of the natural world, all signal this cosmic progress and new world order: the end of the generation of heroes. But the *Iliad*, while evoking these greater themes, also *repurposes* them for the poem's narrative. As the ensuing chapters will argue, on a *non-cosmic* level, the Trojans and their close connection to the natural world stand in for the landscape and biodiversity that we see depicted throughout the poem, while the Achaeans represent the destruction and devastation that is wrought upon the environment. The two sides are entwined with the

[82] As put forth in scholarship on time and temporality in the Homeric poems, discussed in Chapter 2.

imagery of the natural world, and their actions and relation with that world betray a moral dimension to violence and death in warfare.

Conclusion: "And Gaia Flowed with Blood"

The aim of this chapter has been both to introduce the figure of Gaia as an example of the complex and integrated nature of the natural world in the *Iliad* of Homer, and to use Gaia as a framework for thinking about the role of the destruction of the natural world in the poem as it engages and resonates with the wider epic tradition and thus evokes a cosmic time and space. The remaining chapters will explore and analyze further two aspects of the natural world in the *Iliad* that have been revealed in the discussion of Gaia: its relationship with the characterization of Achaeans and Trojans, and its relationship with temporality—past, present, and future. I will aim to show that these two aspects of the natural world are inextricably bound to the motivations of Trojans and Achaeans, suggesting an ethical nature to violence and death in war, as well as a reflection on human-environment interactions that has potentially irreversible consequences for the future.

By analyzing the characteristics of Gaia in Homer and the wider epic tradition thus far, I have tried to recontextualize the meaning of imagery depicting the devastation and conflagration of the natural world in the *Iliad* through viewing the simile of Typhoeus in Book 2 together with moments in the wider epic tradition it resonates with. Gaia's role in the fragmentary *Cypria* and in Hesiod's *Theogony* reveals three things : (1) When Gaia is physically overburdened, this burden will be lightened or removed through outside help (Cronus, Zeus); (2) Gaia is considered a threat to Zeus' rule because of her ancient ties to

generational upheaval and must be defeated by way of fire, or, at least, must suffer collateral damage on a massive environmental scale; and (3) Gaia is a constant and crucial component of cosmic progress and new world orders, whether directly or indirectly, from the severing of Uranus' genitals to Zeus swallowing his first partner Metis to avoid being overthrown by his own offspring.

When reading these moments together with the depiction of Gaia in Book 2 of the *Iliad,* I argue, there are two distinct but parallel lines of interpretation at hand. The first is on the *narrative level* of Homer's poem. The Achaeans, as a burden to Gaia, must be killed in order to lighten this burden and bring her relief. This is consistent with the plan of Zeus to bring honor to Achilles by way of killing many Achaeans in order that the son of Thetis may be returned the honor that has been taken from him. But the will of Zeus extends beyond just the promise made to Thetis in *Iliad* 1, and ultimately Troy must fall and the Achaeans must be successful in their expedition. Thus, the Achaeans also represent the ultimate will of Zeus, which is to annihilate the Trojan people and their world, an action that plays out in the realm of the natural as obliterating fire and tree-cutters consuming and laying waste to the natural environment of Troy.

The second is on a *cosmic* or *traditional* level, simply meaning on a level outside of the scope of time and space of the narrative of the *Iliad* and resonating with the wider epic tradition as we have seen thus far. This second level of interpretation will be discussed further in subsequent chapters, but, as we have already seen, it has to do in large part with imagery depicting the devastation and conflagration of the natural world as representative of the end of the generation of heroes as it links and equates the events of the *Iliad* to other critical moments in cosmic history in the wider epic tradition. The juxtaposition in the *Iliad*

of the imagery of dying as leaves falling and as trees being severed will be instructive in the chapters to come, but for now we can note that the resonances with the wider epic tradition that we have explored signal the events of the *Iliad* as one of these critical moments in cosmic history, a universal event that will shape the future of history and the world. As the natural world is decimated and burned, first only figuratively through the poem's similes, then literally in the narrative action, we are witnesses of the end of a heroic generation that seeks to be immortalized forever.

To conclude, I point our attention to one more dichotomous characteristic of the chapter's namesake, Gaia. As we have seen thus far, the figure of Gaia is closely connected to the death of human beings, both in the *Cypria* and in the *Iliad*. In the Homeric poem, Gaia is inextricably bound to the life and death of the poem's heroes. The *livingness* of Gaia is often juxtaposed to the *death* of human lives—both Achaean and Trojan. This is most clearly seen in the formulation ree d' haimati gaia, "and Gaia flowed with blood".[83] This formulation is often used during moments in the poem where the strain of battle is at its height, and underscores, I suggest, the necessary death of the human world and the permanence through time of the gods and the natural world—after all, human death must take place in order for Gaia to be relieved of her human burden in the poem. The death of human heroes is directly equal to and constitutive of the life and permanence of Gaia, of earth, and the *new* cosmic order. There is in this phrase also a connection with the full stop, end, and death of the generation of heroes and the permanence, continuity, and timelessness of Gaia and the natural world which she represents. The dichotomy of stillness and movement, death and life, ceasing and flowing reveals itself in this formula, and underscores the connection between

[83] *Iliad* 4.451, 8.65, 13.655, 15.714, 20.493, 21.119.

the natural world and temporality that moves from the cosmic past to the unknown future, the nature of which will be analyzed in the ensuing chapters.

Chapter 2

The Natural World in the Present I: The Trojans and their World

Introduction

This chapter is made up of two parts. Before discussing the ways that the cosmic narrative of progress and destruction is redeployed at the level of the narrative events of the *Iliad* through the imagery of the devastation of the natural world (as set up in the previous chapter), it will be instructive to turn briefly to moments in the poem *before* the cosmic narrative is evoked through the simile of Typhoeus in *Iliad* 2, before cosmic destruction is reenacted and thereupon frames the nuances of environmental devastation and conflagration. Thus, the first part of this chapter will consider a few key passages set in the past, before the narrative events of the *Iliad* itself, and focus particularly on the closeness of the Trojan people and their allies to the natural world. In doing so, I hope to illuminate the poem's present action and the way that the depiction of the human-environment relationship changes dramatically when the simile of Typhoeus collapses the narrative of cosmic progress upon the Homeric poem. Part two of this chapter will examine the connection between the Trojan people and their environment in the *present*, marking out the ways that this connection has changed in relation to time.

Depictions of the human-environment relationship that feature in episodes that are placed in the past, in a time prior to the events of the *Iliad*, are characterized in a demonstrably different way than in the present narrative time of the poem. This section will argue that the depiction of human-environment interactions placed in the past, sometimes shown to be just days before the narrative proper, shows signs of a non-destructive time and even of harmony and interdependence, a time *before* the groans of Gaia evoke the wider epic tradition and the destruction and lightning of Zeus upon the natural world. A time that is close but no longer attainable in the narrative of Homer.

Through the presentation of Gaia and the Typhoeus simile, we saw that the Achaeans, while needing to be destroyed as a burden to Gaia, also represent the destruction of her by fire and of the natural environment she represents. In contrast, the Trojans are repeatedly depicted as inextricably bound to their natural environment, an intimate closeness and *likeness* that results in a reading, I suggest, of natural-world-destroyed as Trojan-life-ended, to be discussed in Chapter 3. Thus, the Trojans and their world stand in for the natural environment that is devastated and destroyed in each of the critical moments in cosmic history narrated in the wider epic tradition, while the Achaeans represent the destroyers of that world. However, when turning to glimpses of the past in the *Iliad*, moments that depict time prior to the poem's events, we see that the relationship between humans and the natural world is more fluid: while it can also be marked by human destruction of the environment, it is mostly a relationship marked by interdependence, practicality, and harmony, characteristics that no longer exist in the present narrative of the Homeric poem. In the three examples of the past that we will discuss, there is a sense of the continuity of life even in the

presence or threat of death, the inverse of the depiction of the human-environment relationship in the present action.

Glimpses into the Past: *Before the Sons of the Achaeans Came*

Before turning to the analysis of key passages in the *Iliad*, it may be beneficial to say a word on the concept of *time* in the Homeric poem, seeing as it has been a popular site of scholarship in Homeric studies in recent times. The way that time and temporality is expressed in the *Iliad* has been shown to be anything but straightforward. As Strauss Clay remarks: "The sophistication of the *Iliad*'s manipulation of time, its violation of temporal verisimilitude, emerges as it retrogresses to the war's beginning and points forward to its ending so that the whole Trojan War is encapsulated into a few days."[84] Similarly, Cairns says that Homer "brings the beginning and the end of the war into the poem by including elements from those temporal stages within its compass."[85] Bergren and Kullmann are similarly concerned with how episodes in the Homeric poems look forward and backward, within and without the poems' narratives, sometimes through passages that seem to suspend "temporal realism".[86] Thus, these analyses of time are concerned with how, for example, sequential time in the present corresponds to simultaneous time, and how seemingly illogical

[84] Strauss Clay 2011: 35. Strauss Clay is concerned with the visual poetics of the *Iliad* and how narrative is rendered visible to the audience.
[85] Cairns 2001: 41.
[86] Bergren 2008: "Besides the τειχοσκοπία 'viewing from the wall,' all the action from the catalogue of ships in Book II, to the 'commencement of hostilities' in Book III through the breaking of the oaths in Book IV and its aftermath in Book V, as commentators have pointed out many times, is appropriate to the account not of an end, but of the beginning of a war." So too Kullmann 2001, Schein 1997: 352.

passages like the catalogue of ships in Book 2 or the viewing from the wall in Book 3—in that they do not seem to correspond with a war that is in its ninth year—produce a complex presentation of temporality in the poem. Studies of the relation between space and time in the Homeric poems have likewise received scholarly attention, analyzing in particular the nuances of character perspective and focalization within the narrative.[87]

I am not here proposing a new analysis of time or temporality in Homer or the poems of the wider epic tradition. In fact, it is imperative that the passages that I examine herein are placed concretely into either the past, the present, or the future in relation to the *Iliad*'s narrative events.[88] While the episodes described, for example, in the past and the future, may be vague or not defined rigidly, what is important is that the episode itself be placed concretely in these temporal spaces in relation to the narrative events of the *Iliad*. While I follow upon some of the scholarship cited above—especially that involving space—in some of the close readings of passages in subsequent chapters, what is of most importance for my analysis of the connection between time and the human-environment relation is foremost this temporal demarcation. Let us turn to the first passage in question.

In Book 22, as Achilles chases Hector around the walls of Troy in a race for the Trojan's life, the narrator describes the natural environment by which the two heroes sprint:

> οἳ δὲ παρὰ σκοπιὴν καὶ ἐρινεὸν ἠνεμόεντα
> τείχεος αἰὲν ὑπ᾽ ἐκ κατ᾽ ἀμαξιτὸν ἐσσεύοντο,
> κρουνὼ δ᾽ ἵκανον καλλιρρόω· ἔνθα δὲ πηγαὶ
> δοιαὶ ἀναΐσσουσι Σκαμάνδρου δινήεντος.

[87] Purves 2010a; de Jong 2012.
[88] This will, however, become more complicated when we examine events that take place in the future in Chapter 4, where the concept of "decay" and the *passage* of time will become important.

ἣ μὲν γάρ θ᾽ ὕδατι λιαρῷ ῥέει, ἀμφὶ δὲ καπνὸς
γίγνεται ἐξ αὐτῆς ὡς εἰ πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο·
ἣ δ᾽ ἐτέρη θέρεϊ προρέει ἐϊκυῖα χαλάζῃ,
ἢ χιόνι ψυχρῇ ἢ ἐξ ὕδατος κρυστάλλῳ.
ἔνθα δ᾽ ἐπ᾽ αὐτάων πλυνοὶ εὐρέες ἐγγὺς ἔασι
καλοὶ λαΐνεοι, ὅθι εἵματα σιγαλόεντα
πλύνεσκον Τρώων ἄλοχοι καλαί τε θύγατρες
τὸ πρὶν ἐπ᾽ εἰρήνης πρὶν ἐλθεῖν υἷας Ἀχαιῶν.

They raced along by the watching point and the windy fig tree
Always away from under the wall and along the wagon-way
And came to the two sweet-running well springs. There there are double
Springs of water that jet up, the springs of whirling Scamander.
One of these runs hot water and the steam on all sides
Rises as if from a fire that was burning inside it.
But the other in the summer-time runs water that is like hail
Or chill snow or ice that forms from water. Beside these
In this place, and close to them, are the washing-hollows
Of stone, and magnificent, where the wives of the Trojans and their lovely
Daughters washed the clothes to shining, in the old days
When there was peace, before the coming of the sons of the Achaeans.

Iliad 22.145-156.

As the narrator describes the marvelous characteristics of the dual springs of Scamander, s/he is reminded of a time in the past "before the coming of the sons of the Achaeans". While the recollection of this time is general and not at all definite, we know that it must be referring to a time at least nine years ago, before the Achaeans set foot on the shores of Troy.[89] This

[89] de Jong 2012, 98: "Throughout the *Iliad* we find references to the time before the Greeks came, when Troy was at peace and still fabulously rich (9.401-3; 18.288-9; 24.543-6) and Priam still had many sons (24.495-7, 546). Together with other nostalgic moments (127-8, 440-1, 500-4), they form the backdrop against which the gruesome events of the war stand in pathetic contrast."

certainly places the glimpse into the past at a time prior to the events of the *Iliad*, a time long ago "when there was peace", before the beginning of the Trojan war and before the narrative of cosmic progress is evoked by the Typhoeus simile in Book 2. As such, when we focus on the depiction of the human-environment relationship and on the description of the wonder that is the dual springs of Scamander, we can see a relationship that will prove to be much different than that depicted in the present time.

The actual event in the past described in the passage is the action of washing clothes that the wives of the Trojans and their daughters performed, but the entire passage helps to frame this moment as one that suggests a cyclical, continuous, and harmonious vignette into a now unattainable past. The two springs themselves are indicative of this cyclical continuity and bounty for the Trojan people. We are told that one spring runs hot "as if from a fire that was burning inside it", while the other runs water that is "like hail or chill snow or ice". The oppositional elements of fire and ice situated next to each other—in fact, the one complementary to the other—suggest access to the whole thermal spectrum, from boiling heat to freezing cold, and everything in between. As it stands, the natural world—which, significantly, is here also the river-god Scamander—provides fully for the Trojan people without need for toil or action on their part.[90]

Furthermore, the twin springs also reflect continuity and changelessness that would appear to transcend the expected natural cycle of the seasons. As we see in the passage, the cold spring runs "in the summer-time" (22.151-52), thus implying both the usefulness of

[90] de Jong 2012, 97: "Springs are typically situated just outside cities and are a liminal point of transition between culture and nature." As de Jong points out, the death of Hector in this liminal space will mean the end of Troy; but, crucially for my analysis, the peaceful, untouched scene placed into the past, in contrast, depicts a fully harmonious interaction between the human women and the environment.

having cold water during the warm seasons, and also that same usefulness of the hot water spring (22.149-50) during the winter-time. The nature of the springs does not appear to change through the passage of time, unaffected by the cycle of the seasons, but instead remains the same. The essence of the springs themselves suggest the endurance and the wholeness of the natural world, a continuity that is mirrored in the human world by the Trojan mothers and their daughters washing clothes next to the springs.

The verb used for washing in this passage is *pluneskon*, "they used to wash", the iterative form indicative of repeated action in the past. That is, the wives of the Trojans and their daughters used to repeatedly wash clothes next to the two springs in the past, "when there was peace, before the coming of the sons of the Achaeans" (22.156). The vagueness of the past, limited only to a time before the war began nine years ago, reinforces the continuous action of the Trojan mothers and their daughters *ad infinitum*.[91] As far back from the moment that the Achaeans set foot on Trojan shores as we can go, so far too did this communal and familial activity take place, repeatedly. Moreover, the image of mother and daughter also suggests a generational continuity in the passage. We can imagine mothers taking their daughters to this place of natural wonder to wash clothes, the daughters growing up, having children of their own, taking them in turn down to the springs, and so on, again and again.

In this vague past before the Achaeans came to Troy, and before the narrative time of the *Iliad*, this peaceful domestic action lasts forever. The passage suggests an iterative moment located in a time and space—in a now unreachable past—that depicts harmony between the human and divinely-imbued natural worlds and is framed by cyclical and

[91] de Jong 2012, 97: de Jong notes that the imperfect may signal that the scene is focalized through Hector.

generational continuity, of flourishing life and promise of futurity, all while set against the imminent death of Hector in the present action. This past moment is under no threat of ceasing to exist, the nameless "lovely daughters" suffer no danger or threat of death as the children in the present action of the *Iliad* will.[92] In fact, the closeness of the Trojan daughters to the springs and the river-god's waters keep them safe forever, whereas we will see that Trojan boys who are born next to and even named after rivers in descriptions of their birth are mercilessly killed in the present Iliadic moment. In this glimpse into the past, the natural world, which is also directly tied to the divine, provides fully for the human Trojan community. The Trojans use the natural springs for cultural activity in an interdependent connection between human, god, and nature that we see again in Andromache's description of the funeral of her father Eëtion, where we now turn our discussion.

The Funeral of Eëtion

In *Iliad* 6, Hector meets his wife Andromache and their son Astyanax atop the Scaean gates after searching frantically for them throughout the Trojan citadel. Andromache begs Hector not to return to battle, for the Achaeans will certainly set upon him and kill him (6.410). This is a repeated theme in Andromache's speech, the death of Hector and his leaving her a widow and their son an orphan (6.408, 432). Furthermore, she also underscores

[92] While the "reality" of war that awaits the Trojan community is made evident throughout the poem (I discuss this further in Chapters 3 and 4), even in the contrast of this scene with Hector running for his life, there is a marked difference here in the way that the *nameless* daughters are projected into this almost *un*real, safe past, while the *named* children of the present narrative are struck down in no uncertain terms (discussed below and in more detail in Chapter 3).

the deaths of her closest family: her father (6.414-16), seven brothers (6.421-24), and her mother (6.425-28). The subject of Andromache's speech is death: death that has already come to pass, and death that will soon come to pass. But in the midst of all this death is a description of the funeral of her father, Eëtion. And while inherently marked by death given the occasion, the description that Andromache gives of the funeral is one that emphasizes life and continuity rather than death and cessation.

Andromache begins her account of the deaths of her family members with her father, Eëtion, whom Achilles killed:

> …κατὰ δ᾽ ἔκτανεν Ἠετίωνα,
> οὐδέ μιν ἐξενάριξε, σεβάσσατο γὰρ τό γε θυμῷ,
> ἀλλ᾽ ἄρα μιν κατέκηε σὺν ἔντεσι δαιδαλέοισιν
> ἠδ᾽ ἐπὶ σῆμ᾽ ἔχεεν· περὶ δὲ πτελέας ἐφύτευσαν
> νύμφαι ὀρεστιάδες κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο. 420
>
> …He killed Eëtion
> But did not strip his armor, for his heart respected the dead man,
> But burned the body in all its elaborate war-gear
> And piled a grave mound over it, and the nymphs of the mountains,
> Daughters of Zeus of the aegis, planted elm trees about it.
> 6.416-20.

This event in the past depicts interactions and relationships—among humans but also between human and divine beings, and humans and elements of the environment—that are very different or no longer exist in the Iliadic present. One of these is the relationship between human enemies. As Andromache says, Achilles does not strip her father's armor, but burns him in it, for "his heart respected the dead man". The treatment of Eëtion by

Achilles is starkly different than the treatment he will show to the corpse of Hector at the end of the poem. In defiling the Trojan's corpse and refusing to return his body, the actions of Achilles illustrate how war becomes more brutal over time and especially, I suggest, from time *prior* to the Iliadic present to the poem's narrative action.[93] In this past event there is a level of respect between enemies that is only ever reached in the *Iliad* again in the final book of the poem.

Another aspect of this past event that is unique to this time and space is the presence of the nymphs of the mountains, the *numphai orestiades,* and their participation in the funeral. It is significant that it is Andromache who tells us of their presence and action, not the narrator, in that it suggests that the nymphs were actually present together with the human community during the ceremony, rather than appearing on their own, apart from human vision and interaction.[94] This kind of communion and interaction between humans and the divine is very rare, with almost all human-divine interaction in the *Iliad*'s present narrative being very limited in scope.[95] There is thus a collapsing of boundaries between human and divine, and the fact that the nymphs themselves are called the "daughters of Zeus aegis-bearer", further emphasizes the presence of the divine. The connection between the divine and the natural world is similar to the one we saw earlier in the depiction of the wives and

[93] Graziosi and Haubold, 2010: 197-8.
[94] It is unclear whether Andromache was present for her father's funeral or not, or heard about it from her mother who would certainly have been present at that point in time. Thus Graziosi and Haubold 2010, 199: "Achilles captures Andromache's mother and later releases her for a ransom; she then returns to her own family of origin and dies in the ancestral home of her father."
[95] Achilles and Athena in Book 1; Achilles and Thetis; Diomedes and Athena, Aphrodite, Ares in Book 5; gods helping either Trojans or Achaeans: all these moments are limited visual, physical, or mental interactions, the gods appearing to only one human (Achilles, Diomedes), or appearing in disembodied forms (birds, mist) or in disguise (Iris as Trojan instigator in Book 3, Apollo, etc.).

daughters washing clothes next to the springs of Scamander, and here it continues with the planting of trees.

The planting of elm trees around the burial mound of Eëtion, on the one hand, collapses the boundary of nature and culture, and on the other hand, presents yet another entirely unique moment in all of the *Iliad*: the planting of trees. That the human/cultural act of burial and the planting of trees as memorial are subsumed into one event and one structure suggests not only a coming together of the two, but an equivalence: the one is tantamount to the other; as Graziosi and Haubold note, the planting of trees suggest a "parallel between man-made and natural landmarks and memorials."[96] The porosity of the boundary of nature and culture is one that is present throughout the *Iliad*, as I will argue in the ensuing chapters; thus it is not unique to moments in the past. However, the collaborative and interdependent nature of the human/cultural and natural/divine worlds *is* unique to these glimpses into the past, a dynamic that is no longer shared in the present narrative of the poem.

The planting of trees occurs in no other place in the *Iliad* except here in the description of the funeral of Eëtion—in fact, we almost exclusively see trees destroyed by fire or cut down in the poem, which I will discuss in depth in Chapter 3. In the past moment narrated by Andromache the planting of the trees not only signifies life and futurity, but also the unity and harmony between all life—human, divine, and natural. We get a sense here of continuity even in the face of death; in fact, it is Eëtion's death and his very ash and bone that will become a part of the earth, a part of the natural processes of the newly planted elm trees

[96] Graziosi and Haubold 2010: 198.

and their subsequent growth.[97] The image, then, is one of unity and harmony as well as of a natural cycle of life, death, and continuity. By contrast, the *dis*unity that characterizes the present narrative is further underscored in the type of trees that are planted here: elm trees, *pteleas*. The only other time that we see elm trees is on the bank of Scamander and during the fight between Achilles and the river-god himself; as Achilles is being carried away in the river-god's water, he grabs onto an elm tree which, in contrast to the elm trees depicted in the funeral of Eëtion, is "uptorn by the roots", tumbles from the cliff, and falls into the river's water taking Achilles with itself.[98] This moment in the poem's narrative action underscores the significance of the harmony and connection depicted in the funeral of Eëtion, a moment in the past that is no longer attainable in the poem's present.

The funeral of Eëtion depicts an interconnected and collaborative moment in the past between human enemies, the divine, and the natural worlds. Not only is there a coming together of the three categories of life, but the episode itself appears in a uniquely unreachable past, one that depicts relationships that are impossible in the Iliadic present. The interaction between the human and natural worlds is precisely this, an *interaction*, it is not merely a connection on a symbolic or figurative level, as we will see in the second part of this chapter is the case in the present action of the poem. Moreover, this is a dynamic that perpetuates life and continuity, not death and cessation. The moment is almost picturesque, a memory of a time long past where the Achaean enemy respected his fallen opponent, where honor was afforded to the dead, and where gods and the natural world were depicted in a harmonious interrelationship within the human world. One more example will serve to

[97] The opposite can be said of the dead Achaeans upon whose ash and bone Nestor devises that the Achaean wall be built in *Iliad* 7, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 4.
[98] 21.240-46.

illustrate the unique and bygone nature of the human-environment relationship in the past, this time only days prior to the events of the *Iliad*.

Lykaon's Fig-Tree Stewardship

In *Iliad* 21, as Achilles continues his relentless pursuit and slaughter of the Trojans, harrying them into the river and killing any he lay his hands upon, he comes across Lykaon, a son of Priam. Before their encounter, the narrator tells us how Achilles and Lykaon have met in the recent past, when the son of Peleus and Thetis captured and ransomed the Trojan prince:

> ἔνθ᾽ υἷι Πριάμοιο συνήντετο Δαρδανίδαο
> ἐκ ποταμοῦ φεύγοντι Λυκάονι, τόν ῥά ποτ᾽ αὐτὸς
> ἦγε λαβὼν ἐκ πατρὸς ἀλωῆς οὐκ ἐθέλοντα
> ἐννύχιος προμολών. ὃ δ᾽ ἐρινεὸν ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ
> τάμνε νέους ὄρπηκας, ἵν᾽ ἅρματος ἄντυγες εἶεν,
> τῷ δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἀνώϊστον κακὸν ἤλυθε δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.
>
> And there he [Achilles] came upon a son of Dardanian Priam
> As he escaped from the river, Lykaon, one whom he himself
> Had taken before and led him unwilling from his father's gardens
> On a night foray. He with the sharp bronze was cutting young branches
> From a fig tree, so that they could make him rails for a chariot,
> When an unlooked-for evil thing came upon him, the brilliant
> Achilles.
>
> 21.34-39.

But after finding his way back to Troy, Lykaon falls again into Achilles' hands:

> ἔνδεκα δ᾽ ἤματα θυμὸν ἐτέρπετο οἷσι φίλοισιν 45
> ἐλθὼν ἐκ Λήμνοιο· δυωδεκάτῃ δέ μιν αὖτις
> χερσὶν Ἀχιλλῆος θεὸς ἔμβαλεν, ὅς μιν ἔμελλε
> πέμψειν εἰς Ἄϊδαο καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλοντα νέεσθαι.
>
> For eleven days he [Lykaon] pleasured his heart with friends and family
> After he got back from Lemnos, but on the twelfth day once again
> The god cast him into the hands of Achilles, who this time
> Was to send him down unwilling on his way to the death god.
>
> 21.45-48.

The narrator relates to us this event that has happened in the recent past—certainly, like the funeral of Eëtion, during the war—but also in a time markedly *prior to* the events and narrative time of the *Iliad* and thus prior to the evocation of the cosmic narrative of environmental destruction as progress. The action that Lykaon undertakes in cutting branches from a tree in order to have chariot rails made is unique in that this is only ever an action depicted in similes and is only enacted here. For example, in a simile used to describe the death of Simoeisius at the hands of Ajax in *Iliad* 4, Simoeisius is described as falling like a black poplar, one felled by a "maker of chariots" in order "to bend it into a wheel for a fine-wrought chariot" (4.482-86). We will discuss the content of the tree similes in the following chapter, but the contrast of depictions of human-environment interaction in the present versus past time is once again evident here, especially in the nature of Lykaon's handling of the fig tree.

In the Simoeisius simile mentioned above, the chariot-maker fells the entire tree which then lays at length on the ground, "hardening by the banks of a river" (4.487), the emphasis being on its death and end to growth and continuity. On the contrary, Lykaon is here cutting "young" or "new branches", *neous horpekas*, thus suggesting that he is taking care not to harm the tree and allowing it to continue living and growing. The cutting of young branches poses much less of a risk to the health of a tree than cutting larger and older branches, and younger branches are in general more pliable as well. Thus, Lykaon is demonstrating knowledgeable and informed pruning in his action of cutting branches to make rails for his chariot. The relationship is one of mutual benefit: if Lykaon and the Trojan people properly prune and care for the fig tree, making sure that it continues to bloom and to grow, they will in turn have access to it as a resource, not only in using its wood to make armaments, but presumably to consume its fruit in season as well. It would not benefit the Trojan community to fell the tree outright. Furthermore, the addition in the narrator's description that Achilles caught Lykaon away "from his father's gardens" (21.36) suggests, too, that Lykaon is familiar with the proper handling and caring of plant and vegetal life.

This moment of cutting branches in the past—although framed, like other moments we have seen before, by death (in this case, the imminent death of Lykaon)—depicts in the human-environment interaction an interdependent and harmonious relationship that underscores vitality and the promise of continuity.[99] Contrast to this the speech of Lykaon's killer, Achilles, in *Iliad* 1 as he swears on the scepter his oath to Agamemnon that some day

[99] Although note that when Lykaon is caught in the present action which is closely followed by his death at the hands of Achilles, he is caught *ἐκ ποταμοῦ φεύγοντι*, while "fleeing out of the river", like the river children we will discuss later in the chapter, and in contrast to the Trojan daughters who are perpetually attached in the past to the twin springs of Scamander.

longing will come for Achilles as the Achaeans are laid to waste by man-slaughtering Hector:

> ναὶ μὰ τόδε σκῆπτρον, τὸ μὲν οὔ ποτε φύλλα καὶ ὄζους
> φύσει, ἐπεὶ δὴ πρῶτα τομὴν ἐν ὄρεσσι λέλοιπεν, 235
> οὐδ᾽ ἀναθηλήσει, περὶ γάρ ῥά ἑ χαλκὸς ἔλεψε
> φύλλά τε καὶ φλοιόν·
>
> In the name of this scepter, which never again will bear leaf nor
> Branch, now that it has left behind the cut stump in the mountains,
> Nor shall it ever blossom again, since the bronze blade stripped
> Bark and leafage…
>
> 1.234-37.

The emphasis of Achilles' description of the scepter is entirely on the loss of livingness and future growth.[100] The scepter "will never bear leaf or branch"; it will "never blossom again"; the bronze has "stripped bark and leafage"; and the scepter itself has been taken from "the cut stump in the mountains". Whereas the scene with Lykaon emphasizes the continuity of the fig tree, Achilles focuses on what is lost; not only will the scepter never bloom again, but the tree it was cut from is described simply as "the cut thing", *tomen,* thus attributing to it only the quality of loss, detachment, and injury. The two acts of cutting branches from a tree in a time prior to the events of the *Iliad* are paradigmatic of the connection between the depiction of the human-environment relationship and temporality: in the past, this relationship is

[100] Lynn-George 1988, 48: The oath is constructed from a "relations between language and loss." Schein 1984, 96: "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." Stein 2016, 448: "Achilles downplays the craftsmanship theme and dwells instead on the trauma inflicted on the living branch."

characterized as fluid, able to sustain a relationship between humans and the natural world that is interdependent or destructive; in the present, where we turn shortly, harmonious interaction between humans and their environment is foreclosed, and the Iliadic narrative accelerates towards human destruction of the environment.

The aim of this first section has been to frame the second major argument of the dissertation, namely, that the *Iliad* redeploys the imagery of the destruction of the natural world that is evoked through the simile of Typhoeus in Book 2 as seen in the wider epic tradition in order to situate the events of the poem as a moment of cosmic significance similar to the castration of Uranus, the defeat of the Titans, and the defeat of Typhoeus. I argue that the use of imagery depicting the destruction of the natural world is uniquely reserved for the *present* action of the poem, seeing as this is the time and space for which the poet has evoked the cosmic narrative through the simile of Typhoeus.

Thus, events that are described in the poem as happening in a time prior to the events of the *Iliad*, be it a nebulous past before the war began, or a more recent past in the midst of the war, depict a relationship between humans and the natural world that is usually the inverse of the present: there is a theme of interdependence, interconnectedness, harmony, and the promise of continuity. These specific moments in the past appear at times as mere fantasy when juxtaposed to the present, as longed-for memories of a time and space that is irretrievable and impossible in the current circumstances. The harmony and care in these interactions between humans and nature betray a sense of the ideal even when woven closely with death. As such, these glimpses into the past are scarce and fleeting, reminders of the dire straits that now plague the present time of the *Iliad*, reinforcing the theme of the destruction and devastation of the natural environment that will visit the Trojan people and their land in

the remainder of the poem, and suggesting a changing relationship between humans and the environment from past to present, and ultimately towards the future.

The Natural World in the Present

Chapter 1 offers two premises: (1) based on the figure of Gaia and the resonances she activates within the wider epic tradition through the destruction and conflagration of the natural world, the *Iliad* is positioned as a moment of cosmic significance along the likes of the castration of Uranus, the defeat of the Titans, and the defeat of Typhoeus—for Homer's poem, this is marked by the end of the generation of heroes; and (2) the *Iliad* redeploys the imagery of the destruction of the natural world in the narrative to reflect Achaeans as destroyers of the natural world (as tree-cutters and fire) and Trojans as nature being destroyed.

Before presenting the evidence for premise number two in Chapter 3, the remainder of this chapter will first look at moments that establish or show the Trojans' intimate connection to the natural world in the poem's narrative, in particular to trees and rivers. Contrary to the episodes we examined in the first section of this chapter, which looked at the past as positioned *before* the events of the *Iliad*, the human-environment relationship seen in the poem's present action is one that is not so much practical or interdependent (as in the funeral of Eëtion or Lykaon's cutting of the fig tree's branches to make a rail for his chariot), but rather mostly symbolic and closely woven together at the linguistic and narrative level. We see that the Trojan citadel, its people, and their life and death are depicted as closely

connected with the natural world through the linguistic pairing of the "oak tree and Scaean gates", by means of trees on the Trojan plain and tree similes, and finally through the metonymic quality of the names of Trojan youth and the rivers of Troy.

When taken altogether this closeness reflects not just the Trojan world in the present (e.g., Hector or the citadel of Troy), but also that of a potential (non-) future (e.g., the Trojan youths). In this way, the harmony on the linguistic, narrative, and symbolic level of Trojans and nature is present throughout the Iliadic narrative and suggests an inextricability of the two which verges on the point of a collapse of meaning and identity, so much so that when we encounter oak trees or the river Scamander in the poem, we also recall the Trojan people. The destructions of one or the other are, I will show, mutually evocative.

The Oak tree and the Scaean Gates: Trees on the Trojan Plain

The oak tree in the *Iliad* is a uniquely symbolic and richly semantic entity that appears not only in similes, long and short, but is also present in the narrative action. This may seem a fairly straightforward observation to make, but it is also the case that not many images we see in the poem appear on these two planes of interpretation, and some very prominent ones. For example, the image of the lion which has been the subject of so much scholarship in Homeric studies is only ever present in the similes; for all the diversity and range of the lion similes, we never meet a lion in the narrative action.[101] In fact, we do not

[101] E.g., Lonsdale 1990; Redfield 1994; Clarke 2004.

see shepherds, hunters, packs of dogs, boars, swarms of birds or insects either. The same can also be said about the similes involving natural phenomena—wind, snow, storm, flood, waves crashing.[102] In fact, then, the oak tree—and other tree-related activity like tree-cutting and wildfires, which we will analyze in Chapter 3—is a prominent exception in this sense and offers an interesting opportunity to analyze its function and meaning in the poem's similes and narrative action. We may ask then: do the function and meaning of the oak tree in the similes and the narrative action coincide or diverge, and in what ways? Does this coincidence or divergence allow a precise interpretation of the oak as symbol in the poem? And is it significant that the function and meaning traverse both figural and narrative planes? Keeping these questions in mind, let us turn first to the oak tree in the narrative action before turning to the similes.

The oak tree is first and foremost the tree of Zeus himself. We are explicitly told this twice: when the Trojans and their allies carry Sarpedon's injured body beneath the "very beautiful oak of the aegis-bearer Zeus" (5.693), and when Apollo and Athena, in the likeness of birds, perch "atop the lofty oak of their father Zeus the aegis-bearer" and take their ease watching the gathered Trojans and Achaeans (7.60). The oak tree is thus already given a prominent, kingly, and divine status by way of a direct connection to Zeus, and it is still more closely connected to the gods. Apollo and Athena first meet each other "beside the oak tree" (7.22) before physically perching upon the oak in the form of birds, further connecting it to the divine. Lastly, the oak tree is again physically adjacent to a divinity when Apollo "leaning upon" it, gives strength to Agenor in battle (21.549).

[102] E.g., Fenno 2005 on water; Purves 2010b on wind, describes Troy as a "weatherless place"; conflagration/wildfire *does*, however, appear in both planes.

These moments suggests that the oak in the *Iliad* has mediatory qualities; that is, it seems to be a consistent point of contact between gods and humans. This function as a mediator between the ethereal and earthly realms is reflected in the physiology of trees themselves: they are rooted deep beneath the earth as far as they project toward the sky. One more example of a tree on the Trojan plain makes this point explicit in image and language, though it is not an oak but a pine tree. In Book 14, after Hera has successfully seduced Zeus into a bout of lovemaking away from the battlefield, the god Sleep prepares to sneak upon the son of Cronus in a premeditated plot to temporarily remove Zeus from the action of battle:

> ἔνθ᾽ ῞Υπνος μὲν ἔμεινε πάρος Διὸς ὄσσε ἰδέσθαι
> εἰς ἐλάτην ἀναβὰς περιμήκετον, ἥ τότ᾽ ἐν ῎Ιδῃ
> μακροτάτη πεφυυῖα δι᾽ ἠέρος αἰθέρ᾽ ἵκανεν.
> ἔνθ᾽ ἧστ᾽ ὄζοισιν πεπυκασμένος εἰλατίνοισιν
> ὄρνιθι λιγυρῇ ἐναλίγκιος, ἥν τ᾽ ἐν ὄρεσσι
> χαλκίδα κικλήσκουσι θεοί, ἄνδρες δὲ κύμινδιν.
>
> There Sleep stayed, before the eyes of Zeus could light on him,
> And went up aloft a towering pine tree, the one that grew tallest
> At that time in Ida, and broke through the close air to the aether.
> In this he sat, covered over and hidden by the pine branches,
> In the likeness of a singing bird whom in the mountains
> The immortal gods call chalkis, but men call kymindis.
>
> 14.286-91.

There are a few interesting things to note here. First, the image of the tallest tree on Ida moving through one kind of air and reaching (*hikanen*) the high *aether* reflects the image of tree as mediator between, or at least as participant in, the lower chthonic and the higher

ethereal realms. We see in this passage the depiction of the pine tree as it crosses boundaries of the human and the divine. Moreover, once again we see a god perched atop the tree's branches in the likeness of a bird as were Athena and Apollo above (7.60). Lastly, the god Sleep is "covered over and hidden" by the pine tree's branches, which physically and visually obscure the boundary between tree and god (and bird). There seems to be here, as in the image of Athena and Apollo as birds sitting upon the oak tree, a convergence of ontologies, a literal entanglement of Sleep in the form of a bird with the tree's branches and foliage. The pine tree which reaches the realm of the divine acts as a place where boundaries are porous and intermingled, and reinforces the connection between trees, like the oak of Zeus, and the divine.

The oak tree is also linked linguistically and geographically to the Scaean gates of the Trojan citadel. Three times in the poem we are given the formula "the Scaean gates and the oak tree" in reference to someone or a group of soldiers reaching this point on the Trojan plain.[103] This pairing is interesting inasmuch as it links, linguistically and geographically, the Trojan citadel—that is, the walls themselves, the literal function of which is to defend the Trojan people from their enemies—and the oak tree. It places them vividly next to each other, neither privileging or discriminating between the one and the other. But to what end?

We have already seen that the oak is the tree "of Zeus the aegis-bearer" and linked to the divine. Zeus, as we know, favors and supports the Trojans in this war, even as ultimately he must let the city fall and their people perish (4.30-49). Thus, we may suggest the formula: Zeus favors and brings aid to the Trojans → The oak, as Zeus' tree, represents his presence

[103] *Il*. 6.237, 9.354, 11.170.

and favor → The oak tree—linked linguistically, symbolically, and geographically—to the Scaean gates symbolizes Zeus' favor for the Trojans. It stands then, that the literal, physical representation of defense and protection for the Trojans in the form of the Scaean gates is linked to a symbolic representation of defense and protection in the image of the oak tree and the favor of Zeus. But what is significant is not only that the oak is the tree of Zeus and that the oak stands together with the Scaean gates, but also that there seems to be a convergence of spatial awareness, divine favor, and psychological motivation with narrative action effecting the Trojans at just the place where we encounter not only the oak, but the fig tree on the Trojan plain.

While the oak tree has heretofore been shown to be at least symbolically connected to the divine, to Troy, and to the Trojan people, it is also the case that the oak and the fig, both trees that exist on the Trojan plain, are connected with narrative action that effects the Trojan side. In the example given above, after being wounded in the thigh by Tlepolemus the son of Heracles, Sarpedon is carried by his companions beneath the "very beautiful oak of Zeus the aegis-bearer" (5.692-93). There the son of Zeus loses his life temporarily:

> τὸν δ᾽ ἔλιπε ψυχή, κατὰ δ᾽ ὀφθαλμῶν κέχυτ᾽ ἀχλύς·
> αὖτις δ᾽ ἐμπνύνθη, περὶ δὲ πνοιὴ Βορέαο
> ζώγρει ἐπιπνείουσα κακῶς κεκαφηότα θυμόν.
>
> And the mist mantled over his eyes, and the life left him,
> But he got his breath back again, and the blast of the north wind
> Blowing brought back to life the spirit gasped out in agony.
>
> 5.696-99.

Beneath the shade of the lovely oak tree that is the symbol of his father Zeus, Sarpedon comes to a literal second wind, and breathes in his second life. As de Jong notes, the symbolic function of space is important to the Homeric epics, and this episode demonstrates that the oak tree "means safety for the Trojans and their allies."[104] It is no wonder that during the duel with Tlepolemus just before this, it was Zeus himself who protected Sarpedon from death ("…but his father fended destruction away from him", 5.662).

In Book 9, as the embassy of Odysseus, Ajax, and Phoenix tries to convince Achilles to rejoin the war effort, Achilles recounts the time when he was still fighting among the soldiers:

> …ὅφρα δ᾽ ἐγὼ μετ᾽ Ἀχαιοῖσιν πολέμιζον
> οὐκ ἐθέλεσκε μάχην ἀπὸ τείχεος ὀρνύμεν Ἕκτωρ,
> ἀλλ᾽ ὅσον ἐς Σκαιάς τε πύλας καὶ φηγὸν ἵκανεν·
> ἔνθά ποτ᾽ οἶον ἔμιμνε, μόγις δέ μευ ἔκφυγεν ὁρμήν. 355
>
> …and yet when I was fighting among the Achaeans
> Hector would not drive his attack beyond the wall's shelter
> But would come forth only so far as the Scaean gates and the oak tree.
> There once he endured me alone, and barely escaped my onslaught.
> 9.352-55.

We see the formula that links the Scaean gates and the oak tree as we did before, but the context provides us with further evidence of the semantic value of the oak. Here, as Achilles recalls, Hector never used to go beyond the gates or the oak while he himself was still fighting for the army. That is, Hector would not go beyond the boundary that defines the

[104] de Jong 2012: 33.

limit of divine protection from Zeus, embodied, as we have seen, in the Scaean gates and oak. Furthermore, Achilles also recalls a time in the past when Hector stood his ground one on one against him and "barely escaped" death. When Hector *did* "endure" (the verb *mimno*, a defensive stance) to stand against Achilles in this boundary defined by the Scaean gates and the oak tree, the son of Priam survived, *just*. We see again a link between the oak tree—and, thus, the divine protection of Zeus, as above with Sarpedon—and the Trojan side. What is more, this moment that Achilles recalls acts as a direct point of contrast to the next and final time he and Hector will meet in battle, but, significantly for our examination of the meaning and function of trees in the poem, at that point they will meet next to the fig tree.

Two more examples of the oak tree further support its meaning and function on the Trojan plain as a symbol of Zeus' protection and as a mental stimulant to the Trojan people. In Book 11, Agamemnon performs his *aristeia* killing handfuls of Trojans and their allies and putting others to flight back towards the Trojan citadel. Then we are told:

> ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δὴ Σκαιάς τε πύλας καὶ φηγὸν ἵκοντο, 170
> ἔνθ᾽ ἄρα δὴ ἵσταντο καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀνέμιμνον.
>
> But when they had made their way to the Scaean gates and the oak tree
> The Trojans stood their ground, and each side endured the other…
>
> 11.170-71.

Once again it is at this limit and boundary that the Trojans stop their retreat and endure, *anemimnon*, a form of the same verb Achilles used of Hector above. It is as if on instinct that the Trojans turn and defend, since no orders are given to them by any of their captains. This limit defined by the Scaean gates and the oak tree just *is* as a marker—perhaps a reminder—

of courage, valor, and strength for them. It is a point of no return that, if breached, may signal the end of Trojan existence. What is more, ten lines later, when Agamemnon is "at the point of making his way to the city / and the steep wall", Zeus descends from the sky and takes his place "along the ridges of Ida / of the fountains, and held fast in his hand the thunderbolt", and from there he proceeds to direct Iris to instruct Hector that if Agamemnon should breech the Trojan line, at that point he would have Zeus' power (*kratos*) to mount an offensive against the Achaeans (11.181-94). The image of Zeus descending from Olympus wielding his iconic thunderbolt underscores the significance of the oak tree, together with the Scaean gates, as a divinely protected boundary.

Lastly, in Book 21, as Achilles is rampaging across the Trojan plain leaving bodies strewn in his wake, Apollo gives strength to Agenor the son of Antenor in order that the Achaeans might not take "gate-towering Ilion" (21.543-46). We are told:

> ἐν μέν οἱ κραδίῃ θάρσος βάλε, πὰρ δέ οἱ αὐτὸς
> ἔστη, ὅπως θανάτοιο βαρείας χεῖρας ἀλάλκοι,
> φηγῷ κεκλιμένος· κεκάλυπτο δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἠέρι πολλῇ.
>
> He [Apollo] drove courage into his heart, and stood there beside him
> In person, so as to beat the heavy hands of death from him,
> And leaned there on an oak tree with close mist huddled about him.
>
> 21.547-49.

As we have seen, the oak tree is connected to both the divine and the protection of the Trojan side.[105] In this example, it is Apollo who physically leans upon the oak tree as he both drives

[105] de Jong 2012: 33-5.

courage into the heart of Agenor and stays with him in order to protect him from death. Moreover, we see another theme that we have seen before: the "blurriness" of boundaries where trees and gods interact. As we saw the god Sleep in the form of a bird covered over by the pine tree's branches, and Athena and Apollo also in the form of birds perched on the branch of the oak, now again we see Apollo "with close mist huddled about him", obscured as he leans on the oak tree lending courage and protection to the Trojan Agenor.

Suffice to say, then, that the oak tree that is situated on the Trojan plain is intimately connected to the Trojans. It is situated together with the Scaean gates on a geographic, linguistic, and symbolic level that equates it with defensive capacity for the city; it is also named explicitly as the tree of Zeus and linked to general divine presence, a divine presence that almost always shows itself in the form of aid to the Trojan side; and even when no divine presence is depicted, whenever a Trojan soldier reaches the limit of the oak and Scaean gates, he is filled with courage and a capacity to stand against the oncoming Achaean foe. However, as much as the oak tree represents a boon for the Trojans, so much so does the fig tree represent their demise.[106]

The fig tree acts similarly to the oak tree in the *Iliad* in that, appearing on the Trojan plain, it helps to define Trojan space. Moreover, and more significantly for our concern with the natural world's close connection to the Trojans, the fig tree represents moments in the poem that are dangerous for the Trojan side. Andromache advises Hector in Book 6 that he should station his people "by the fig tree, there where the city / is openest to attack, and where the wall may be mounted".[107] The fig tree is located outside the walls of Troy, and is

[106] See also Tsagalis 2004: 125-6, for more discussion of which see below.
[107] 6.433-34.

the place where three times before the greatest of the Achaeans have tried to storm the citadel, so Andromache tells us. The fig tree is positioned at a place where the walls of Troy are vulnerable, contrary to the oak tree and Scaean gates which represent strength and endurance.

We see the fig tree again when the Trojans run past it in their flight to the Trojan citadel, chased by Agamemnon.[108] This moment is just four lines before the example of Trojan endurance we saw above (11.170) where the Trojans turn and stand up against the rampaging Agamemnon.[109] As such, this moment proves one of the symbolic and narrative functions of both the oak and the fig tree in one dynamic sequence: the one reflects Trojan strength, the other Trojan anxiety and danger. We hear about what again seems to be the same fig tree from the narrator in Book 21 as s/he describes the previous meeting of Achilles and Lykaon eleven days prior to their current encounter, a passage that we discussed above.[110] The fact that Achilles captured Lykaon on a night foray indicates that it was a stealth mission, one that carried him close to the Trojan wall, likely to the very spot of the fig tree mentioned by Andromache earlier. Once again, the very spot where the fig tree is planted is a location of danger for the Trojan side. Lykaon is captured by Achilles as he is physically handling the fig tree, an ominous portent for the people of Troy.

Lastly, we hear one more fateful time of a fig tree, this time clearly *the* fig tree that sits by the walls of Troy mentioned earlier by Andromache. In Book 22 as Achilles chases Hector around the walls of Troy we are told that they "raced along by the watching

[108] 11.166-68.
[109] de Jong 2012: 25 marks this sequence as one that is rare in how it combines more than one landmark (the fig and oak trees, as well as the Scaean gates and the tomb of Ilus).
[110] 21.34-38.

point and the windy fig tree / always away from under the wall and along the wagon-way".[111] The four moments where we see the fig tree are all moments of "despair and danger" for the Trojans: the place where Andromache says the wall is most vulnerable, the flight of the Trojans, the capture of Lykaon by Achilles, and the race for Hector's life.[112] This last moment in particular, as we noted earlier, resonates with Achilles' mention, in Book 9, of the last time he and Hector met in battle: Hector, enduring to face him by the Scaean gates and the oak tree, the furthest he ever dared to go while Achilles was still fighting, barely escaped death at his hands. Now, as the fig tree marks their flight around the walls of Troy, Hector will assuredly *not* escape death at the hands of Achilles.

The fig tree, then, defines a boundary of anxiety and danger for the Trojans, while the oak marks their endurance and courage reflected in the divine help they receive. These two trees are not just markers of space and movement in the Trojan landscape, they are also bound together with narrative action, structure, and the psychology of the Trojan world. They are linked closely to the Trojans on a symbolic and narrative level. This is a closeness

[111] 22.145-46.

[112] Tsagalis 2004, 125-6: "The last part of Andromache's speech is rich in allusive references, all of which have hitherto gone more or less unnoticed. The first among these allusions is the use and metrical placement of the word *erineon* in line 433, which is two more times attested in the *Iliad*; in 11.166-168 the Trojans rushed in full retreat past the wild fig-tree. In this case the same expression is used as in 6. 433: *par' erineon*. Also in 22. 145 when Achilles chases Hector, we hear the same word once more as 'they rushed past the look-out place (*skopen*) and wind-tossed wild fig-tree (*erineon enemoenta*)'. Thus in the *Iliad* the word *erineos* is always attested in the accusative and placed at position 5, after the penthemimeral caesura…The wild fig-tree (*erineos*) is a "pattern-marker", which whenever evoked alludes, by its metonymic function, not only to a visible spot in the Trojan plain, but also to a situation of despair and danger for the Trojans. In all these cases either Hector or the Trojans are in peril or persecuted by some Achaean. It is noteworthy that in 11. 166-168 the Trojans run in panic past the wild fig-tree, but when they arrive at the oak tree (the other visible spot in the Trojan plain), they stop their retreat. Therefore the word *erineos*, by means of pattern-deixis, has through all these passages a specific Iliadic function: it is *the metonymic equivalent of danger and death for the Trojans.*" (emphasis my own) While Tsagalis fails to consider the Lykaon scene, my reading here chimes with his inasmuch as the fig tree is clearly a "pattern-marker" of this moment of danger for the Trojans, but when observed through a consideration of the symbolism and meaning of trees in a wider sense, the fig tree contributes to a consistent depiction and ideology of the natural world in relation to the *Iliad*'s narrative action.

that is different than that seen in the glimpses of the past which is interactive, practical, and interdependent (e.g. the funeral of Eëtion, the Trojan women and their daughters washing clothes at the dual springs). That is to say, the trees on the plain here do not themselves exert any actual power or lend any aid themselves to the Trojans (or harm them), rather they stand together in these charged moments symbolically, their "interaction" with the Trojans is more *metaphysical* in nature. Now that we have established the relationship of the oak and the fig tree to the Trojans, let us move briefly to the tree similes.

The Tree Similes

This section will be brief in that it seeks to establish simply, for now, when and to what extent the tree similes in the *Iliad* are used in order to evaluate how closely they are connected to the Trojan community—this will also be placed in opposition with the tree similes' connection to the Achaeans, which will be analyzed further in Chapter 3. The similes will be revisited in the following chapter where we will analyze their content and outcome (i.e., what happens to the trees in simile? who cuts them down? etc.), and evaluate the relevant scholarship. For now, let us look at when, where, and at what length the tree similes are used in the *Iliad*. In doing so we may discover what characterizes the tree similes in the poem: the context within which they are used, whether they are used of Trojans or Achaeans, and how many lines of text are dedicated to them in each case.

There are thirteen tree similes in the *Iliad* that all "appear only in contexts describing who is either dead (or about to die) or unmoving".[113] Of those thirteen similes, seven are used of the Trojans and their allies, and six are used of the Achaeans.[114] This number would appear to denote the tree similes as fairly indiscriminate until we look at their form and length. Of the similes used of the Trojan side, three are three lines in length, one is five lines, two are seven lines, and only one is a mere one line in length. Of the similes used for the Achaeans, on the contrary, one simile is four lines in length, with the other five being all only one line long. Moreover, four of those five are doubles and are said by the same person, in the same book, and *about* the same person: Achilles. In Book 18, as Achilles and the Achaeans grieve over the death of Patroclus, Thetis gathers with her Nereid sisters in the deep of the sea and laments that her mortal son will soon perish:

ὤ μοι ἐγὼ δειλή, ὤ μοι δυσαριστοτόκεια,
ἥ τ᾽ ἐπεὶ ἂρ τέκον υἱὸν ἀμύμονά τε κρατερόν τε
ἔξοχον ἡρώων· ὃ δ᾽ ἀνέδραμεν ἔρνεϊ ἶσος,
τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ θρέψασα φυτὸν ὡς γουνῷ ἀλωῆς.

Ah me, my sorrow, the bitterness in this best of child-bearing,
Since I gave birth to a son who was without fault and powerful,
Conspicuous among heroes; and he shot up *like a young tree*,
And I nurtured him, *like a tree grown in the pride of the orchard*.

18.54-57.

[113] Scott 2009: 22-23. Scott is here only referring to tree similes wherein the tree obviously represents the warrior (e.g., he fell "like a tree", he stood still "like a tree"), and not similes where trees are present but not the obvious point of comparison.
[114] Used of Trojans and their allies: 4.447-89, 13.177-82, 389-93, 427-44, 14.414-20, 16.482-84, 17.50-60; of Achaeans: 5.559-60, 12.127-36, 18.56, 57 = 18.437, 438.

These two similes are repeated by Thetis to Hephaestus a few hundred lines later as she asks him to forge a new set of armor for Achilles (18.437-38).

The form and length of the tree similes show, then, that much more space, (and arguably, then) attention, and care are paid to the similes used for the Trojan side over the Achaean. In fact, as we shall see in the following chapter, some of the similes used of the Trojans—like that of Simoeisius, Euphorbus, and Hector—are among the most elaborate and singular in all of Homer's poetry. Suffice to say for now that of the tree similes used in the *Iliad* far and away the most detailed, elaborate, and lengthy are used to depict the Trojans over the Achaeans. Moreover, of the seven similes used for the Trojan side, six depict or lead to an immediate death of the Trojan soldier (the seventh is a symbolic/proleptic death), while for those used of the Achaeans, only one of the six depicts the death of an Achaean soldier. We will return to the close analysis and interpretation of the tree similes, as well as the theme of the destruction of the natural world, in Chapter 3, but for now let us turn to the final section of this chapter as we continue to elaborate on the close connection between the Trojans and the natural world.

River Children

The closeness of the Trojan people to the natural world lies not just in the topography of the landscape, not only in the symbolic representation of the oak and fig trees, and not just in a likeness depicted in simile, but extends to the naming of Trojan children. We encounter at least four times in the poem the killing of a young Trojan soldier who has been

named after the iconic rivers of the land of Troy. The names of these Trojan youths—Simoeisius, Scamandrius (twice), and Satnius—not only recall the mighty, life-giving rivers after which they are named, but further suggest an intimate relationship between the Trojans and the natural world around them.

As we mentioned in the previous section, the tree simile used in the depiction of the death of Simoeisius is one of the most closely studied similes in the *Iliad*. Before detailing the tree simile, however, the narrator describes the birth of Simoeisius:

> ἔνθ᾽ ἔβαλ᾽ Ἀνθεμίωνος υἱὸν Τελαμώνιος Αἴας
> ἠΐθεον θαλερὸν Σιμοείσιον, ὅν ποτε μήτηρ
> Ἴδηθεν κατιοῦσα παρ᾽ ὄχθῃσιν Σιμόεντος
> γείνατ᾽, ἐπεί ῥα τοκεῦσιν ἅμ᾽ ἕσπετο μῆλα ἰδέσθαι.
> τοὔνεκά μιν κάλεον Σιμοείσιον· οὐδὲ τοκεῦσι
> θρέπτρα φίλοις ἀπέδωκε, μινυνθάδιος δέ οἱ αἰὼν
> ἔπλεθ᾽ ὑπ᾽ Αἴαντος μεγαθύμου δουρὶ δαμέντι.
>
> There Telamonian Ajax struck down the son of Anthemion
> Simoeisius, unmarried in his youth, whom once his mother
> Descending from Ida bore beside the banks of Simoeis
> When she had followed her father and mother to tend the sheep flocks.
> Therefore they called him Simoeisius; but he could not
> Render again the care of his dear parents; he was short-lived,
> Beaten down beneath the spear of high-hearted Ajax…
>
> 4.473-79.

The stress on the short-lived Trojan's birth only serves to highlight his untimely death, and we are told plainly that he was named after the river upon whose banks he was birthed by his

mother. His very name is a memorial to the place of his birth and to the divine river. This is also stated as the case for the naming of Satnius, another young Trojan soldier:

ἔνθα πολὺ πρώτιστος Ὀϊλῆος ταχὺς Αἴας
Σάτνιον οὔτασε δουρὶ μετάλμενος ὀξυόεντι
Ἠνοπίδην, ὃν ἄρα νύμφη τέκε νηΐς ἀμύμων
Ἤνοπι βουκολέοντι παρ᾽ ὄχθας Σατνιόεντος. 445

There far before them all swift Ajax son of Oileus
Made an outrush, and stabbed with the sharp spear Satnius,
Enop's son, whom the perfect naiad nymph had borne once
To Enops, as he tended his herds by Satnioeis river.

14.442-45.

Here again the naming of the young soldier is attributed either to the location of his birth, namely, next to the Satnioeis river, or to the place where his father tended his herds.

A similarly strong connection with a river may be inferred for the next two Trojan youths—though we are not told plainly as with the previous two examples—both of whom are named *Scamandrius*. In Book 5, with the fighting and killing in full swing, Menelaus kills the son of Strophius, Scamandrius (5.49-50). We are not given a backstory to his birth by the river Scamander, though we may be encouraged to think this is the case. We are told that he was a "fine huntsman of beasts", taught by Artemis herself to slay every wild thing in the mountain forest (5.51-52). More telling, perhaps, is the second Trojan youth named after the river Scamander. In Book 6, as Hector finally finds Andromache upon the Scaean gates, we are given a brief description of their son, Astyanax:

ἥ οἱ ἔπειτ᾽ ἤντησ᾽, ἅμα δ᾽ ἀμφίπολος κίεν αὐτῇ
παῖδ᾽ ἐπὶ κόλπῳ ἔχουσ᾽ ἀταλάφρονα νήπιον αὔτως
Ἕκτορίδην ἀγαπητὸν ἀλίγκιον ἀστέρι καλῷ,
τόν ῥ᾽ Ἕκτωρ καλέεσκε Σκαμάνδριον, αὐτὰρ οἱ ἄλλοι
Ἀστυάνακτ᾽· οἷος γὰρ ἐρύετο Ἴλιον Ἕκτωρ.

She [Andromache] came to him there, and beside her went an attendant carrying
The boy in the fold of her bosom, a little child, only a baby,
Hector's son, the admired, beautiful as a star shining,
Whom Hector called Scamandrius, but all of the others
Astyanax – lord of the city; since Hector alone saved Ilion.

6.399-403.

For now, it is enough to note that the baby son of Hector and Andromache, the human embodiment of the future of Troy and the Trojan people, is not just named after his father's defensive prowess (Astyanax, *astu- + anax*, "lord of the city"), but is named by Hector alone after the river of Troy, *Scamandrius*. As we saw before, here again it is significant that these Trojan youths are named after geographic fixtures of the Trojan natural world. Moreover, these rivers are life-giving for the city and people of Troy,[115] and one, Scamander, will literally stand up to fight against the Achaean enemy for the sake of Troy (more on this in the following chapter). These rivers, especially Scamander and his brother Simoeis, are often named throughout the poem. Before being "embodied" in *Iliad* 21, Scamander is named six times, twice together with Simoeis, to provide spatial orientation on

[115] Holmes 2015, a detailed discussion of which see more in Chapters 3 and 4.

the Trojan plain.[116] In this way they act similarly to the oak and fig tree, though there is no overt symbolic power that exerts itself in the case of the rivers.

What is more, the twice-named son of Hector and Andromache shares this peculiarity with the river-god Scamander: as the Trojan youth is called Scamandrius by Hector and Astyanax by "all the others", so too is the river-god called Scamander by men, but Xanthus by the gods (20.74).[117] Thus, the name Scamander, on the part of the river-god, is a uniquely *human* construct. Hector is the only one who calls his son Scamandrius, and we are not given any explicit reason as to why that is. We might infer that Astyanax was born next to the river, or simply that Hector wanted to honor the river-god who is a part of the harmony and proper functioning of the Trojan world.[118] Whatever the case may be, it is another clear and intimate connection to the natural world.

In closing, we might consider one more aspect of the names of the son of Hector and Andromache. The name given to him by "all of the others", Astyanax, is a distinctly *cultural* name. That is, he is called "lord of the city; since Hector alone saved Ilion", a name given to Hector's son in order to commemorate the qualities and protective capacity of the child's father. As Kirk notes, Astyanax "looks like a special honorific name used by the other Trojans as a sign of respect for his father and his part in their defense."[119] The name itself

[116] Strauss Clay 2011; de Jong 2012.
[117] For double-naming of characters in Homer, see Kirk 1984: 212-13, Higbie 1995: 24-27.
[118] Kirk 1984, 212-13: "Scamander is the main river of Troy, and Hector must have named his son after it." Graziosi and Haubold 2010, 192: "Hector's chosen name for his son expresses a connection with the Trojan landscape and may also express the wish that the river might protect the boy." We will discuss this sentiment further in Chapter 3.
[119] Kirk 1984 above. Graziosi and Haubold 2010, 192: "The son's name reflects the role of the father." See also Kanavou 2015, 80-1: "The passage [6. 399-403, cited above] suggests that the name [of Astyanax] was felt to express a capacity of the child's father; but it is also an appropriate name for the little boy who would have been king, had it not been for the Trojan war."

and the reason behind it project an image of a protected, defensible city; Hector is, after all, the great bulwark of the Trojans.[120] His other name, on the contrary, is directly linked to the natural world and to the divine. We have seen this close link between man-made cultural defensive object and the natural world before: in the formulation "the Scaean gates and the oak tree". The pairing Astyanax/Scamandrius acts in a similar sense, I suggest, in that the son of Hector is representative of the interconnectedness of the Trojan world—its people, its city, its future—with the natural world that surrounds them—the earth, the trees, and the rivers. It is not even so much that the natural world "surrounds" the Trojan people, but rather, as we see with the naming of children born next to the banks of rivers, it is a fluid unity between the two that goes beyond just "nature and culture" and collapses those boundaries.[121]

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to show the many levels at which the Trojan people and their city are shown to be closely connected to the natural world in the narrative present of the *Iliad*, in contrast to the connection depicted in the time prior to the events of the poem. It is no longer a practical or interdependent relationship that is depicted as in glimpses of the past (e.g., the washing of clothes by the dual springs, the funeral of Eëtion), but rather a closeness that exists on a symbolic level. We no longer see the Trojan women using the dual springs of Scamander, a hot and a cold spring, to wash laundry; no longer do the nymphs of the mountains attend funerals for kings and memorialize the moment by

[120] Graziosi and Haubold, 2010: 192: "Hector's name was understood to mean protector or 'holder' of Troy." Also Higbie 1995: 11.
[121] This closeness approximates what Holmes 2015 argues with "natureculture", discussed further in Chapter 3.

planting fresh elm trees above their tombs. Instead, the oak and the fig tree have their place on the Trojan plain and symbolize both endurance and danger for the Trojans, respectively, bound together with the narrative action of the poem. The oak tree, as the tree of Zeus, is uniquely connected to divine presence, and its place in the formulation "the Scaean gates and the oak tree", together with its narrative function, symbolize a unity between god, nature, and culture that is not separate from but nearly *metonymic* of Trojan resistance and protection, the one signifying and strengthening the other. It is an equivalence and a "standing together" rather than a "coming together" of boundaries and ontologies.

The similes likewise present a closeness that is based on *likeness* between Trojans, their allies, and trees. Finally, the names of some Trojan youths—Simoeisius, Scamandrius, and Satnius—evoke the rivers marking the landscape of Troy and, thus, reveal the very real closeness that the Trojan people experience with the natural world, at times even giving birth next to the rivers' rolling streams. This intimacy is encapsulated by the son of Hector and Andromache, called both Astyanax and Scamandrius, but his closeness to the river-god, and the knowledge of the wider epic tradition, portend doom for the child, as I will argue in Chapter 3. Thus, the Trojans are uniquely and intricately connected to their environment linguistically, narratively, and symbolically. In what follows we will see that most of the comparisons of Trojans and natural entities, that is the similes, center on death: trees are cut down, burned, or uprooted through extreme weather, and the "river children" are all killed. But what is more, these figural deaths of the natural world are then enacted in the narrative action: the Achaeans become actual tree-cutters and cut down oak trees at the base of Mt. Ida, and the river-god Scamander is boiled in fire. This crossing-over from figural to narrative destruction signals the *Iliad*'s redeployment of the imagery of the destruction of the

natural world from the wider epic tradition, a redeployment that, of course, serves Homer's narrative ends. As the closeness of Trojans to the natural world and the depiction of Achaeans as destroyers of that world plays out in the present action of the poem, significant nuances emerge that implicate Achaean violence with the *un*natural and Trojan death with the impossibility of a future.

Chapter 3

The Natural World in the Present II: The Achaeans Destroy the Natural World

Introduction

At long last we arrive at our reckoning: the destruction and extirpation of the Trojan world. In Chapter 2 we set out two premises based on the figure of Gaia in Book 2 of the *Iliad*: first, that through epic resonance, Gaia and the simile of Typhoeus evoke the narrative of cosmic progress and establish the events of the *Iliad* as a moment itself of cosmic significance within the wider epic tradition; and second, that the *Iliad* redeploys the imagery of the destruction of the natural world as seen in the wider epic tradition to serve the poem's narrative ends, namely, to figure the complete devastation of the Trojan people and their world by linking the Trojans to nature and presenting the Achaeans as destroyers of that nature.

We have also analyzed the close relationship that the Trojan people and their city share with the natural world: in the time before the narrative of the *Iliad*, the Trojan world appears to be one of interdependence and practicality between humans and the natural world; in the Iliadic present, however, the present in which the cosmic narrative has been enacted through the groans of an overburdened Gaia and the simile of Typhoeus, the Trojans and the natural world are connected only in a symbolic and figurative sense. Thus, the oak of Zeus

and the fig tree, the tree similes, and the naming of Trojan youth after the rivers of Troy suggest a more understated, symbolic level of intimacy and connection. But it is in the Achaean connection to the destruction of the natural world, seen in many of the moments we have already discussed as showing the Trojan connection to the natural world, that we see the cosmic will of Zeus redeployed in the poem in all its fiery devastation.

This chapter will set out to examine episodes in which the Achaeans are compared to nature-destroying forces, in particular, to tree-cutters and wildfires. On the back of the previous chapter, which argued for the close connection between Trojans and the world of trees and the rivers of Troy, we will now analyze the moments where those very same trees are cut down, uprooted, and set ablaze, and where the "river children" are killed and the river-god Scamander is boiled in flames. These acts of destruction and conflagration upon the natural world mirror moments in the wider epic tradition, in particular as seen in Hesiod, where events of cosmic significance have taken place—the castration of Uranus, the Titanomachy, or the defeat of Typhoeus—but are also repurposed to illustrate the death and devastation of the Trojan people on the level of the natural world. In this way, the cosmic past coincides with, and collapses upon, the Iliadic present. The depiction of the destruction of the natural world in the *Iliad* carries with it the embers of the cosmic past while severing completely the roots of the Trojan world in the present. Moreover, we see that the imagery of natural destruction also ominously suggests in no uncertain terms the loss of a Trojan future and continuity, and suggests that the violence of the Achaeans is excessive and unnatural.

The Leaf Metaphor and the Tree Similes: Incompatible Imagery? or, How do Heroes Die?

Another way to think about the cosmic past with the narrative present in the *Iliad* is to consider together the imagery of leaves and trees. The pairing is not only suitable for the purposes of this analysis, but the two naturally go together—they are literally of the same stock. In particular we will analyze the speech of Glaucus in *Iliad* 6 and Apollo in 21.

The imagery of leaves in Homer has long been discussed by scholars for its symbolic range, often cited as an image of the fragility and vulnerability of human life, the strength and anonymity of a group, and the cyclical nature of life and death.[122] As with the tree similes, we are not here so concerned with what value, positive or negative, the leaf imagery appears to place on the manner of and the *kleos* inherent in the hero's death,[123] nor does the argument herein hinge upon an interpretation of this kind. Rather, the two sets of images together are analogic for the two interpretative planes through which we have been interpreting the depiction of the destruction of the natural world in the *Iliad*; that is, the leaf imagery as representing cosmic time, the tree similes as representing the narrative present.

The imagery of leaves described in the speeches of Glaucus and Apollo in Books 6 and 21 of the *Iliad* suggests a reflection upon human and divine life that shifts our perspective from the present moment to the historical or cosmic. Let us take a look at the passages side by side. After he is asked who he is by Diomedes, Glaucus responds:

> Τυδεΐδη μεγάθυμε τί ἢ γενεὴν ἐρεείνεις;
> οἵη περ φύλλων γενεὴ τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
> φύλλα τὰ μέν τ᾽ ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ᾽ ὕλη

[122] Fränkel 1921; Lynn-George 1988: 198-99; Grethlein 2006; Stein 2013; Purves 2010a: 225.
[123] See for example Stein 2013 and 2016.

τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ᾽ ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη.
ὣς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ ἣ μὲν φύει ἣ δ᾽ ἀπολήγει.

Great-hearted son of Tydeus, why ask of my generation?
As the generation of leaves, so is that of humanity.
The wind scatters the leaves on the ground, but the live timber
Burgeons with other leaves in the season of spring returning.
So one generation of men will grow while another dies.

6.145-49.

And after being challenged by Poseidon to make the first attack in a fight between them, Apollo responds to the god of the deep:

ἐννοσίγαι᾽ οὐκ ἄν με σαόφρονα μυθήσαιο
ἔμμεναι, εἰ δὴ σοί γε βροτῶν ἕνεκα πτολεμίξω
δειλῶν, οἳ φύλλοισιν ἐοικότες ἄλλοτε μέν τε
ζαφλεγέες τελέθουσιν ἀρούρης καρπὸν ἔδοντες, 465
ἄλλοτε δὲ φθινύθουσιν ἀκήριοι. ἀλλὰ τάχιστα
παυώμεσθα μάχης· οἳ δ᾽ αὐτοὶ δηριαάσθων.

Shaker of the earth, you would have me be as one without prudence,
If I am to fight even you for the sake of insignificant
Mortals, who are as leaves are, who at one point flourish and grow warm
With life, and feed on what the ground gives, but at another
Fade away and are dead. Therefore let us with all speed
Give up this quarrel and let the mortals fight their own battles.

21.462-67.

While there are certainly nuances to the ways that leaf imagery is used as it relates to its present and wider context as we stated above, there are three observations of note for our

purposes regarding these two depictions, which are both put into the mouths of the poem's characters: (1) the cyclical nature of life and death for humankind, (2) the presumption of generational continuity, and (3) the temporal aspect of the imagery.

Observations one and two are closely connected, and while the one cannot persist without the other, there is a difference between them. First of all, and perhaps most obvious, the image of the falling and burgeoning of leaves is cyclical, as has often been noted. What has happened before, life and death, will happen again. As Glaucus notes, the wind scatters the leaves on the ground, but the live timber burgeons with "other leaves" (ἄλλα δέ) in the season of spring returning. The words "others" and "spring returning" reflect this aspect of iteration, while the presence of the season of spring directly expresses the idea of a cycle: the seasons will come and go, again and again, so too humankind.[124] Apollo expresses this similarly in his response to Poseidon, saying that human beings are as leaves who "at one time" flourish (ἄλλοτε μέν) and are alive, "but at another" (ἄλλοτε δὲ) fade and die.[125] The cyclical nature of the image persists even in the two passages taken together: in the first passage, leaves fall and die, then others come to life and take their place; in the second passage, leaves begin alive and "warm", *then* fade and die. The passages themselves together create a cycle of life and death.

But this very same expression of a cycle of life and death in the leaf imagery also suggests generational continuity: life *will* persist beyond the present, as it has before. In the first passage, this is most clearly expressed in the "live timber" which continuously burgeons

[124] Lynn-George 1988, 199 gives this passage a quality of "ambivalent survival", where in the "infinite process of mortality there is almost a perpetual survival which guarantees anonymity and insignificance."
[125] Lynn-George again highlights the pessimistic valence for mortals: "Apollo abandons a dying world."

with new leaves once the previous leaves have fallen. The timber itself is not reflective of cycles as the leaves are, rather its generative ability reflects continuity of life itself. The second passage does not depict this distinction as clearly, but still suggests continuity through the image of leaves. The speech is given through the perspective of a god: Apollo remarks on the human condition in disdain, saying to Poseidon that he would be called "one without prudence" if he chose to fight with Poseidon, a god, for the sake of the Trojans, mere mortals. But the image of leaves and their depiction of the human life and death cycle within Apollo's speech also suggest the continuity of human life, with the contrast of divine and human time underscoring the fact that *these* mortals will live today and be gone tomorrow, with others taking their place, while the gods, like Apollo and Poseidon, will persist unchanged and uninterrupted.

Lastly, the two passages suggest a unique temporal aspect to the leaf imagery, one that takes us away from the present and "zooms out", giving us instead a cosmic or historical perspective of life and death. Another way to look at it is that these two moments take the present and place it within a spectrum or continuum of past, present, and future. In the first passage, Glaucus responds to Diomedes by asking "why ask of my generation?", before then following with the leaf imagery and a long description of his ancestry. Glaucus places himself, and thus the present moment, within the context of the past, that which has come before. Glaucus ends the leaf imagery by saying "So one generation of men will grow while another dies", placing his own ancestry and himself within this generalizing statement: as his ancestors lived and died, so he and others of his generation live now and will die, and after

him so another generation will live and die, and so on.[126] The leaf imagery subsumes past, present, and future, something that may not be the case with the tree similes, to which we will turn shortly. Glaucus is not addressing his own individual life and death here; rather he is placing it together with the lives of humankind in his generation in the context of past and future—this includes both Trojans and Achaeans.

However, in the *Iliad*, heroes do not die "like leaves", so while the imagery of leaves falling is here clearly representative of death, it is not *individual* death, but a *collective*, generational, and transhistorical death that they symbolize. Apollo expresses this temporal aspect of separation from the present in the second passage which he ends by saying, "let us with all speed / Give up this quarrel and let the mortals fight their own battles". Mortals are like leaves that will live and die over and over, there is no need for gods like Apollo and Poseidon, for whom time is everlasting, to concern themselves with the present passing crop. Apollo views the life and death of the present generation of mortals in the context of a continuum of past, present, and future, a generation of mortals whose generative process is cyclical and thus will persist unchanged again and again. Moreover, both Apollo and Glaucus speak about the likeness of men and leaves in terms of the human species, not individual groups of people as Trojans or Achaeans, thus further "zooming out" from the present temporal and narrative moment.

Thus, we see that the imagery in the two passages depicts the life and death of humankind as cyclical, presumes its continuity, and places it within a temporal scale that includes past, present, and future. However, when we examine the tree similes, to which we

[126] Thus Purves 2010a, 225: The leaves here "signify the innumerable cycles of human generation and the seasons".

now turn, and in particular those that describe trees that are chopped down or uprooted, we get a sense of incompatibility with the leaf imagery regardless of the closeness between the two sets of images. Let us now look closely at a few examples of the tree similes that we accounted for in the previous chapter, keeping in mind the disparity of length and detail given to similes used of Trojans on the one hand, and Achaeans on the other.

The death of the Trojan youth Simoeisius and the extended simile and necrologue which follow is a simile that has received much scholarly attention. Ajax approaches the young Simoeisius in a passage that depicts only the third death in the narrative proper (4.473-89):

ἔνθ᾽ ἔβαλ᾽ Ἀνθεμίωνος υἱὸν Τελαμώνιος Αἴας
ἠΐθεον θαλερὸν Σιμοείσιον, ὅν ποτε μήτηρ
Ἴδηθεν κατιοῦσα παρ᾽ ὄχθῃσιν Σιμόεντος
γείνατ᾽, ἐπεί ῥα τοκεῦσιν ἄμ᾽ ἕσπετο μῆλα ἰδέσθαι·
τοὔνεκά μιν κάλεον Σιμοείσιον· οὐδὲ τοκεῦσι
θρέπτρα φίλοις ἀπέδωκε, μινυνθάδιος δέ οἱ αἰὼν
ἔπλεθ᾽ ὑπ᾽ Αἴαντος μεγαθύμου δουρὶ δαμέντι.
πρῶτον γάρ μιν ἰόντα βάλε στῆθος παρὰ μαζὸν
δεξιόν· ἀντικρὺ δὲ δι᾽ ὤμου χάλκεον ἔγχος
ἦλθεν· ὁ δ᾽ ἐν κονίῃσι χαμαὶ πέσεν αἴγειρος ὣς
ἥ ῥά τ᾽ ἐν εἰαμενῇ ἕλεος μεγάλοιο πεφύκει
λείη, ἀτάρ τέ οἱ ὄζοι ἐπ᾽ ἀκροτάτῃ πεφύασι·
τὴν μέν θ᾽ ἁρματοπηγὸς ἀνὴρ αἴθωνι σιδήρῳ
ἐξέταμ᾽, ὄφρα ἴτυν κάμψῃ περικαλλέϊ δίφρῳ·
ἣ μέν τ᾽ ἀζομένη κεῖται ποταμοῖο παρ᾽ ὄχθας.
τοῖον ἄρ᾽ Ἀνθεμίδην Σιμοείσιον ἐξενάριξεν
Αἴας διογενής…

There Telamonian Ajax struck down the son of Anthemion
Simoeisius, unmarried in his youth, whom once his mother
Descending from Ida bore beside the banks of Simoeis
When she had followed her father and mother to tend the sheep flocks.
Therefore they called him Simoeisius; but he could not
Render again the care of his dear parents; he was short-lived,
Beaten down beneath the spear of high-hearted Ajax,
Who struck him as he first came forward beside the nipple
Of the right breast, and the bronze spearhead drove clean through the shoulder.
He dropped then to the ground in the dust, like some black poplar,
Which in the land low-lying about a great marsh grows
Smooth trimmed yet with branches growing at the uttermost tree-top:
One whom a man, a maker of chariots, fells with the shining
Iron, to bend it into a wheel for a fine-wrought chariot,
And the tree lies hardening by the banks of the river.
Such was Anthemion's son Simoeisius, whom illustrious
Ajax killed.

4.473-89.

The description of Simoeisius' life and death is pathetically charged. Not only does his name reflect his living, flowing, life-giving namesake (the Simoeis river), but his father's name too, "Anthemion" ("flowery"), reveals his close connection to youth, vigor, and nature (this comes across in the adjective *thaleron*, from the verb *thallo*, "to grow").

The story of Simoeisius' birth by the banks of the Simoeis river underscores his connection to the natural world and to the river in particular, as we saw before. The hero drops to the ground "like some black poplar", "smooth trimmed yet with branches growing at the uttermost treetop". The description of the tree resembles the image of the young hero we

might imagine; as Schein remarks, "We visualize the smooth body of an adolescent, hairless except for the top of his head".[127] This is likely true, given the stress this vignette places on the hero's birth and his youth. After the tree is felled, it "lies hardening by the banks of the river". The death of the tree next to the bank of a nameless river recalls and inverts the birth of the hero "beside the banks of the Simoeis", while its "hardening" reflects the stiffness that the corpse of Simoeisius will undergo.

Thus, the tree simile, by mirroring the likeness of Simoeisius and the story of his birth, adds still more details for our visualization of, and the sympathy felt for, his death.[128] Like his tree counterpart, Simoeisius now also lies on the ground, useless, lifeless, cut down, and dead. As stated previously, the value that the simile adds to the death of the hero or his inherent *kleos* is not necessarily critical for the aim of this project,[129] but I will cite the scholarship that argues for various lines of interpretation of especially this simile, readings besides the one that sees the tree as adding pathos to the death of the warrior. For example, one can read the simile as emphasizing the result and the victor rather than, or more than, the consequence and the victim. This reading privileges the fact that the felled tree will be used to make a wheel for a "fine-wrought chariot", and, as a result, that Simoeisius' death is less

[127] Schein 2016: 8.
[128] On the striking pathos in this simile, Coffey 1957:117 says that "the additional details - the growth of the tree, and the purpose for which it has been felled - have a graphic value. As a result one is more interested in the tree, and so feels more sympathy for the fallen warrior to whom it is compared." Moulton 1977:56-7 comments that "The death of Simoeisius is outstanding as the poet's portrait of a doomed young warrior, come to the war from his parents, and soon to perish…A warrior's end is a typical occasion for a simile in the *Iliad*, and his fall is often compared to a tree. Yet this passage remains highly individual… [the simile is] integral to the passage's effect, and is welded to the narrative, affording it pathos and intensity." See also Porter 1972:15; Kirk 1985:85.
[129] The importance will lie in the manner in which the Achaeans are ultimately depicted on the whole as destroyers of the natural world.

sympathetic because there is a usefulness to it suggested by the felled timber.[130] Others point to the fact that the simile itself, in its beauty and ornate composition, takes us away from the image of Simoeisius' death, and so undercuts it.[131] Still others do not settle on one reading, but point out that there can be multiple interpretations working together in the simile, especially pathos for the victim and glory for the victor, but also pathos and heroization for the victim.[132] I do not propose here to privilege one reading over the other, but rather to illuminate the major interpretations of tree similes in modern scholarship as seen in the Simoeisius passage, far the longest and most detailed of the lot, as we return to the aim of this section, namely, to illustrate the destruction of trees in the present narrative at the hands of the Achaeans.

[130] Reckford 1972:64 n.4 says of the Simoeisius simile that there is "less empathy as the tree is felled, more stress on the positive result, what is done with the timber", and of Homeric tree similes in general that "the stress is on the result, the product. Homer's similes tend generally to help us accept the death of men in battle as natural, ordinary events." Stein 2016:458 says that "the narrator uses tree similes – and the "woodcutter" element in particular – to celebrate the superior strength and endurance of the victorious Achaeans."

[131] Meiggs 1982:107 says of the simile that it "is a fascinating illustration of the craftsman's practice but it takes us far away from Simoeisius and the battle." So too Benardete 2000:38-9 says that "Simoeisius is lost in a work of art. His death becomes less painful…the simile of the poplar overshadowed the death it was meant to describe." Although I would mostly agree with Benardete, I think that the beauty of the simile is only felt fully *because* it describes the young warrior's death, and so the two must go hand in hand, the one amplifying the other.

[132] Rood 2008:29 recognizes that death and heroization are both present in the simile, saying that "While acknowledging the poignancy of the death of the blooming and short-lived Simoeisius, the craftsman responds to the impermanence of nature by fashioning out of it a beautiful object of culture." Ready 2011:256-7 instead sees the simile as emphasizing both the death of Simoeisius and the glory of Ajax, saying that "By the end, the simile's vehicle portion is just as much about what Ajax did as it is about what Simoeisius suffered." Lovatt 2013:280 posits multiple readings as possibilities, saying that "This simile [Simoeisius] combines the straightness and strength of a fine plant with a sense of death as material for a craftsman. Does this simile offer a contrast between the pointless destruction of war and destruction with a constructive claim? Or does Simoeisius' death contribute to Ajax's reputation? Or is the narrator the analogue of the chariot-maker, turning Simoeisius into a finely wrought piece of poetry? These plant images, then, turn heroes into objects, if living objects, beautiful to look at; they also show a certain self-consciousness, a distancing, even as they create pathos, and evoke generational continuity cut off, the mothers deprived of their sons, who will remain unmarried." This comment seems to me the best introduction to tree similes, and trees in general, in the *Iliad*. The many elements of the simile itself, the various contexts in which trees appear, and a comprehensive look at tree imagery and descriptions of real trees in the poem suggest a difficulty of interpretation and resistance to a onefold semantic value, expressed well here by Lovatt.

In this simile the tenor and vehicle are clear: the felled poplar tree represents the killed Simoeisius, while the chariot-maker who fells the poplar represents the victorious Ajax. This simile is particularly illustrative of the death and destruction of Trojan nature at the hands of the Achaeans on two levels: first, the Trojan soldier's death is represented as a tree cut down, and second, the Trojan youth is said to be named after the river Simoeis on whose banks he was born. Thus, we see the death not only of a tree but also, metaphorically, of the river of Troy.

Of the six remaining tree similes used of the Trojans, three depict the tree in the simile as being cut down by either a bronze axe or by carpenters, and all three end in the death of the Trojan soldier.[133] Moreover the figure of the tree-cutter or tree-felling craftsman in the poem is almost exclusively used of the Achaeans, as trees are of Trojans, and this will culminate in the Achaeans becoming literal fellers of trees in the narrative proper, as we will see at the end of this section. But first, let us examine two of the remaining tree similes used of Trojans that also depict the felling of a tree, this time, though, through extreme weather.

The first of these similes foregrounds the beauty and untimely death of Euphorbus on the Trojan side, and depicts a highly detailed closeness and likeness between the fallen soldier and a tree, as in the Simoeisius passage, which is elevated with the introduction of a tree simile (17.50-60):

δούπησεν δὲ πεσών, ἀράβησε δὲ τεύχε᾽ ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ.
αἵματί οἱ δεύοντο κόμαι Χαρίτεσσιν ὁμοῖαι
πλοχμοί θ᾽, οἳ χρυσῷ τε καὶ ἀργύρῳ ἐσφήκωντο.

[133] Imbrius killed by Teucrus: 13.177-82; Asius killed by Idomeneus: 13.389-93; Sarpedon killed by Patroclus: 16.482-4.

οἷον δὲ τρέφει ἔρνος ἀνὴρ ἐριθηλὲς ἐλαίης
χώρῳ ἐν οἰοπόλῳ, ὅθ᾽ ἅλις ἀναβέβροχεν ὕδωρ,
καλὸν τηλεθάον· τὸ δέ τε πνοιαὶ δονέουσι
παντοίων ἀνέμων, καί τε βρύει ἄνθεϊ λευκῷ·
ἐλθὼν δ᾽ ἐξαπίνης ἄνεμος σὺν λαίλαπι πολλῇ
βόθρου τ᾽ ἐξέστρεψε καὶ ἐξετάνυσσ᾽ ἐπὶ γαίῃ·
τοῖον Πάνθου υἱὸν ἐϋμμελίην Εὔφορβον
Ἀτρεΐδης Μενέλαος ἐπεὶ κτάνε τεύχε᾽ ἐσύλα.

He fell with a thud, and his armor clattered upon him,
And his hair, lovely as the Graces, was splattered with blood, those
Braided locks caught wasp-wise in gold and silver. As some
Slip of an olive tree strong-growing that a man raises
In a lonely place, and drenched it with generous water, so that
It blossoms into beauty, and the blasts of winds from all quarters
Tremble it, and it bursts into pale blossoming. But then
A wind suddenly in a great tempest descending upon it
Wrenches it out of its stand and lays it at length on the ground; such
Was Euphorbus of the strong ash spear, the son of Panthous,
Whom Menelaos Atreides killed, and was stripping his armor.

17.50-60.

The focus of the simile is on the beauty of Euphorbus, especially his hair, "lovely as the Graces". The tree simile stresses the care of the hero's upbringing and his individuality, his uniqueness, raised as the tree is "in a lonely place". But the tree begins to take on the likeness of Euphorbus' beautiful aesthetic, and the hero that of the tree, as it is watered generously until it "blossoms into beauty" and "bursts into pale blossoming". The description of the

blooming, thriving tree reminds us of what the hero's hair *used* to look like, before his death "splattered with blood" the lovely braided locks "caught wasp-wise in gold and silver".

The strong-grown tree, trembling at the "blasts of winds from all quarters", trembles but does not break, perhaps not unlike Euphorbus used to fare in battle when he was still alive. Nevertheless, the hero is killed by Menelaus and the tree is wrenched from its stand by a sudden wind and lies "at length on the ground". The devastating end to the tree's life, whose tender care and growth are so carefully detailed in the simile, magnifies the sympathy for the death of the hero because, like the tree, "such was Euphorbus".[134] But the overt focus on the beauty of both hero and tree also suggests a reading that highlights the aesthetic brilliance of the fallen warrior, the artful detail presenting Euphorbus' death as a spectacle.[135]

The way the details of the tree's life, care, and physical characteristics are closely woven with the description of Euphorbus and his beautiful locks of hair, as was the case in the simile of Simoeisius, is unmatched in the six tree similes used of Achaeans which we reckoned in the last chapter. For example, in *Iliad* 5 Aeneas kills the Achaean twin brothers Orsilochus and Crethon who, after being compared to lions in a long simile, are described as follows:

τοίω τὼ χείρεσσιν ὑπ᾽ Αἰνείαο δαμέντε
καππεσέτην, ἐλάτῃσιν ἐοικότες ὑψηλῇσι. 560

[134] Mueller 2009: 106 says that "The falling tree can be elaborated in the direction of pathos or terror", using the Euphorbus simile as an example for the former, the Hector simile (which we will analyze next) for the latter. Edwards 1991: 68 says that the simile is "pathetic".
[135] Vernant 1991 on a 'beautiful death'. Thus Rood 2008: 25 says of this passage that the simile praises Euphorbus as "[the] young tree reflects two of the most important qualities of the hero: youth and beauty."

Such were these two who beaten under the hands of Aeneas
Crashed now to the ground as if they were two tall pine trees.

5.559-60.

The tree simile is only three words long, nearly as simple as a simile can get: "like" or "as" + a *comparandum*, in this case "tall pine-tree". Moreover, this is the only tree simile of the six used of Achaeans to describe their death. There is no space or attention given to the likeness between the Achaeans and the tall pine-trees besides the similarity of their fall, nor is there any mention of the cause of the trees falling: no (Trojan) tree-cutters or (Trojan) extreme weather phenomenon. In the case of Euphorbus, it is clear that his killer, Menelaus, is represented by the sudden wind that wrenches the olive tree from the ground (… "such was Euphorbus of the strong ash spear, the son of Panthous / Whom Menelaos Atreides killed...").

This closeness is similarly reflected in the last tree simile we encounter, that used of the fall of Hector in battle. The passage describes the "pseudo-death" of Hector after Ajax hits him in the neck with a rock (14.414-20):

ὡς δ᾽ ὅθ᾽ ὑπὸ πληγῆς πατρὸς Διὸς ἐξερίπῃ δρῦς
πρόρριζος, δεινὴ δὲ θεείου γίγνεται ὀδμὴ
ἐξ αὐτῆς, τὸν δ᾽ οὔ περ ἔχει θράσος ὅς κεν ἴδηται
ἐγγὺς ἐών, χαλεπὸς δὲ Διὸς μεγάλοιο κεραυνός,
ὣς ἔπεσ᾽ Ἕκτορος ὦκα χαμαὶ μένος ἐν κονίῃσι·
χειρὸς δ᾽ ἔκβαλεν ἔγχος, ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ δ᾽ ἀσπὶς ἐάφθη
καὶ κόρυς, ἀμφὶ δέ οἱ βράχε τεύχεα ποικίλα χαλκῷ.

As a great oak goes down root-torn under
Zeus father's stroke, and a horrible smell of sulfur uprises

> From it, and there is no courage left in a man who stands by
> And looks on, for the thunderstroke of great Zeus is a hard thing;
> So Hector in all his strength dropped suddenly in the dust, let
> Fall the spear from his hand, and his shield was beaten upon him,
> And the helm, and his armor elaborate with bronze clashed over him.
>
> 14.414-20.

This simile, like the tree similes of Simoeisius and Euphorbus, is unique in various ways: the tree is the only one to be "root-torn", the only one to produce a smell, and the only to be struck by the lightning of Zeus in the poem. While Hector of course does not die here in this moment, after he is carried to safety, he is *described* in terms that evoke death: he lays down and dark night mists over his eyes. The closeness between Hector, Troy, Zeus, and the oak tree has already been discussed at length in the previous chapter, and the implications of these connections in this simile are grievous. We will return to these close ties at the end of the chapter, but for now let us note again the connection between Trojan and tree in simile, the uprooting of the tree and the (pseudo)death of the Trojan, and the cause of the uprooted tree (lightning) linked to the Trojan's opponent, in this case Ajax again.

The tree similes that we have seen show a vivid depiction of death in the present narrative. The deaths (or pseudo-deaths) of Simoeisius, Euphorbus, and Hector are all described in great detail and all three heroes are intimately linked with the tree that is felled or uprooted in simile. While the leaf imagery we analyzed earlier depicts a cyclical, continuous, and cosmic perspective on the life and death of mortals, the tree similes suggest a view that is quite the opposite; they undercut the cyclical nature and inherent continuity of the leaf imagery and underscore, by contrast, the immediacy of death and impossibility of

future generation.[136] By depicting the trees as cut down, lying still and stiff on the ground, or uprooted entirely from the earth, the similes leave no room or possibility for the tree to grow or bloom ever again. While Glaucus muses that while one generation of leaves may fall to the ground, nevertheless "the live timber / Burgeons with leaves again in the season of spring returning", the tree similes present a stark contrast in the narrative reality of death: mortals do not die, in the *Iliad*, like leaves floating down from a tree-branch, they die like trees cut down or uprooted whole.

It is not necessarily that the leaf and tree imagery are incompatible, or that the poet of the *Iliad* has somehow jumbled the two simile families, but rather that, when they are read closely together, and allowed to illuminate each other, the natural imagery reflects two different temporal aspects which help to tell the story of the poem on the traditional and narrative levels. The leaf imagery does reflect the cyclical, continuous, and transhistorical nature of the human condition which will persist beyond the events of the *Iliad*; the tree similes, by contrast, suggest that the current generation of humankind, especially the Trojan heroes and their people who are most closely and intimately connected to trees in the poem, will die *now*, in the narrative's *present* time, and will not persist beyond this age. While the image of an everlasting, burgeoning, life-giving world-tree, whose branches continuously bloom new generations of leaves in due course and at the apportioned time, is an optimistic way to view the significance of one's own life and death within the confines of the human species from the beginning of time to the infinite future, the *Iliad* depicts the bleak reality of life and death, of present and (non)future, for the Trojans as a tree that is cut down, torn from

[136] Thus, Purves 2010a, 225: "Yet these leaves are set in a paradoxical relationship to the trees on which they grow. For trees repeatedly symbolize an individual human life in Homer…"

the ground on which it grows and blooms, and cast aside, the impossibility of continuity evident in the unnatural placement of the tree parallel to the earth instead of perpendicular to it.

Thus, we can summarize the leaf and tree imagery as follows: leaves indicate generational continuity and the cyclical nature of life and death, while tree imagery indicates a full-scale destruction and an inability for continuity of life or future. Trojans are most often and much more closely connected to the world of trees in the poem, while the Achaeans are most often depicted as tree-*cutters* and other causes of a tree's fall and destruction, such as lightning or wind. Therefore, taking this all into account, I suggest that when we see the image of a tree being felled also outside the confines of simile, not only do we see the Trojan as tree and Achaean as destroyer, but that the image, contextualized by the leaf imagery, also suggests the annihilation of the Trojan future. This image and these associations culminate in and are enacted by the Achaean army in Book 23 where they become actual tree-cutters, felling oak trees at the base of Mt. Ida.

We began the previous chapter by focusing on the oak and fig trees that we see in the narrative action of the poem, and then moved to the figural trees in simile; now we move from the figural trees and tree-cutters of simile to the oak trees and tree-cutters of the narrative action. As we observed when we discussed the image of the tree in the previous chapter, the tree is in a privileged category of entities that appear in the narrative action of the poem *and* in the figural world of the similes. Still more surprising is that in Book 23 we see the figural *scene* of the tree-cutter felling trees, which we just analyzed, enacted in the narrative action. After the shade of Patroclus visits Achilles in his sleep asking to be buried so that he can cross the gates of Hades (23.69-71), the Achaeans prepare for the funeral and

burial of Patroclus by first heading out to the base of Mt. Ida to cut wood for the pyre (23.110-24):

…ἀτὰρ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
οὐρῆάς τ᾽ **ὄτρυνε καὶ ἀνέρας ἀξέμεν ὕλην**
πάντοθεν ἐκ κλισιῶν· ἐπὶ δ᾽ ἀνὴρ ἐσθλὸς ὀρώρει
Μηριόνης θεράπων ἀγαπήνορος Ἰδομενῆος.
οἳ δ᾽ ἴσαν **ὑλοτόμους πελέκεας ἐν χερσὶν ἔχοντες**
σειράς τ᾽ εὐπλέκτους· πρὸ δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ οὐρῆες κίον αὐτῶν.
πολλὰ δ᾽ ἄναντα κάταντα πάραντά τε δόχμιά τ᾽ ἦλθον·
ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δὴ κνημοὺς προσέβαν πολυπίδακος Ἴδης,
αὐτίκ᾽ ἄρα δρῦς ὑψικόμους ταναήκεϊ χαλκῷ
τάμνον ἐπειγόμενοι· ταὶ δὲ μεγάλα κτυπέουσαι
πῖπτον· τὰς μὲν ἔπειτα διαπλήσσοντες Ἀχαιοὶ
ἔκδεον ἡμιόνων· ταὶ δὲ χθόνα ποσσὶ δατεῦντο
ἐλδόμεναι πεδίοιο διὰ ῥωπήϊα πυκνά.
πάντες δ᾽ ὑλοτόμοι φιτροὺς φέρον· ὡς γὰρ ἀνώγει
Μηριόνης θεράπων ἀγαπήνορος Ἰδομενῆος.

… Now powerful Agamemnon
Gave order for men and mules to assemble from all the shelters
And bring in timber, and a great man led them in motion,
Meriones, the henchman of courtly Idomeneus. These then
Went out and in their hands carried wood-cutting axes
And rope firmly woven, and their mules went on ahead of them.
They went many ways, uphill, downhill, sidehill and slantwise;
But when they came to the spurs of Ida with all her well springs,
They immediately set to hewing with the thin edge of bronze and leaning
Their weight to the strokes on towering-leafed oak trees that toppled
With huge thundering; then the Achaeans splitting the timbers

> Fastened them to the mules and these with their feet tore up
> The ground as they pulled through the dense undergrowth to the flat land.
> All the wood-cutters carried logs themselves; such was the order
> Of Meriones, the henchman of courtly Idomeneus.
>
> 23.110-24.

To begin with, Agamemnon orders the soldiers "from all shelters" to "bring in timber", marking already the nature of their foray, as well as the participation of every single Achaean present. The Achaeans go off carrying "wood-cutting axes", no longer swords or armaments of war, but tools specifically marked for the task of felling trees.[137] Once they reach the foot of Mt. Ida, however, we encounter trees that we have only seen in similes and next to the Scaean gates on the plain of Troy: "towering-leafed oak trees". The oak tree of course is defined by its association to Zeus, the gates of Troy, Hector, and thus to the protection and defensive capacity of the Trojan world. Interestingly, the leafiness, indicated by *hupsikomos*, of the oak trees nicely brings to mind the leaf imagery we have just discussed, and so the connotations of cosmic and narrative time collapse into the single figure of the oak tree. Moreover, the Achaeans set eagerly to cutting the oak trees down with the "thin edge of bronze", that is, a bronze axe, referred to in this metonymic way in the tree similes as well.[138] Finally, the felling of oak trees complete, the Achaeans depart carrying the felled wood altogether, and as they leave they are referred to as "all the tree-cutters", *pantes d' hulotomoi*.

[137] Though *pelekus* can be used in peace and war times, the adjective *hulotomos*, used only in this passage (twice), marks it as uniquely suited to this task.
[138] Asius and Sarpedon in 13.389-93, 16.482-84, respectively.

The passage is staggering for its close mirroring of the tree-cutting scenes in the figural world of simile. Where before we made a connection between Achaeans and tree-cutters, as well as other causes of the destruction of trees in the tree similes, here we see them literally become them: the Achaeans who at the beginning of the passage are summoned by Agamemnon from "all the shelters" (*pantothen ek klision*), by the end are "all wood-cutters" (*pantes hulotomoi*) who carry "wood-cutting axes" (*hulotomous pelekeas*). They are thematically and linguistically marked as agents of felling trees. The trees they cut down are the very clearly symbolically-charged oak trees: the trees of Zeus, trees of the same kind as the one that stands in steadfast relation to the Scaean gates, and that work in the narrative as markers of courage and endurance for the Trojan army. While the passage itself is set in light of the funeral of Patroclus, and we may very well think of the death of Patroclus in the felling of the trees,[139] the literal felling of oak trees by wood-cutting Achaeans, "all" of the Achaeans, surely evokes the mass killing of Trojans and, further, the devastation of the Trojan citadel, its people, and its world. The cumulative association of the oak tree with the Trojans, of dead Trojan soldier to a fallen tree, and of Achaeans to destroyers of trees, culminates in this enacted tree-cutting scene that becomes the *last* tree-cutting scene in the *Iliad*. This signals the fulfilment of the destruction of the natural world as one with the destruction of the Trojan world by bridging the figural and the literal worlds.[140]

The imagery of trees and leaves that we have analyzed so far has vividly depicted the destruction of the Trojan people and their world by the Achaeans in the narrative present of

[139] Stein 2013.

[140] Note: Trojans will still go out to collect wood from the base of Mt. Ida for the funeral of Hector in Bk.24 (783-84), but there is no description of it. While the oak trees here maintain the associations of especially Trojan death, the absence of the active felling of the trees is appropriate as the close of the poem and of war in the *Iliad*'s narrative.

the *Iliad*, but has also suggested the end of a Trojan future, the inability of Trojan continuity. Before moving on to the fire and wildfire imagery that incidentally brings conflagration upon trees and forests, let us turn briefly to the figure of Agamemnon whose characterization and actions echo the force of the tree imagery as eradicating any possibility of a Trojan future.

"Let all of Ilion Perish Utterly"

In *Iliad* 6, with battle, warfare, and death well and truly underway, Menelaus confronts Adrestus on the Trojan side. The Trojan's horses were tangled in a tamarisk growth on the plain, shattering their rider's chariot and leaving him there on the ground as they, broken free, "went on toward the city".[141] Adrestus supplicates Menelaus, asking to be taken alive in exchange for an abundant ransom that his wealthy father will offer for his life. Menelaus is persuaded, but when he was "at the point of handing him to a henchman / to lead back to the fast Achaean ships,"[142] Agamemnon meets him to say:

ὦ πέπον ὦ Μενέλαε, τί ἢ δὲ σὺ κήδεαι οὕτως
ἀνδρῶν; ἦ σοὶ ἄριστα πεποίηται κατὰ οἶκον
πρὸς Τρώων; τῶν μή τις ὑπεκφύγοι αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον
χεῖράς θ᾽ ἡμετέρας, μηδ᾽ ὅν τινα γαστέρι μήτηρ
κοῦρον ἐόντα φέροι, μηδ᾽ ὃς φύγοi, ἀλλ᾽ ἅμα πάντες
Ἰλίου ἐξαπολοίατ᾽ ἀκήδεστοι καὶ ἄφαντοι.

[141] 6.37-41.
[142] 6.52-53.

> Dear brother, O Menelaus, are you concerned so tenderly
> With these people? Did you in your house get the best of treatment
> From the Trojans? No, let not one of them go free of sudden
> Death and our hands; not the young boy that the mother carries
> Still in her body, not even he, but let all of Ilion
> Perish utterly, unmourned for and unseen.
>
> 6.55-60.

The words of Agamemnon express a desire to utterly destroy the Trojan world and preclude a possibility of a future for them—not unlike the interpretation of tree imagery in connection to the Trojan community we discussed above. Not only does the Achaean commander ask for the wholesale destruction of every single Trojan of the current generation ("let not one of them go free"), but even of the unborn children still carried in the womb (*gasteri meter / kouron eonta pheroi*) of Trojan mothers, the literal embodiment of a Trojan future. Agamemnon asks that they make the Trojans "unseen", *aphantoi*, to make them disappear from the face of the earth. This is a sentiment that goes far beyond any violence enacted or expressed in the poem, even beyond that of Achilles when he finally returns to battle. What Agamemnon advocates here is genocide, a complete eradication of the Trojan people, their culture, and their world.

Given these words and their potential connection to the imagery of trees being felled or uprooted (thus presenting an impossibility of future life or continuity), it is fitting that Agamemnon is linked to the image of the tree-cutter in a simile during his *aristeia* in Book 11. As the long day of battle goes on, the time of the day at which the Achaeans finally break through the Trojan battle line is described as follows (11.86-90):

ἦμος δὲ δρυτόμος περ ἀνὴρ ὀπλίσσατο δεῖπνον
οὔρεος ἐν βήσσῃσιν, ἐπεί τ᾽ ἐκορέσσατο χεῖρας
τάμνων δένδρεα μακρά, ἄδος τέ μιν ἵκετο θυμόν,
σίτου τε γλυκεροῖο περὶ φρένας ἵμερος αἱρεῖ,
τῆμος σφῇ ἀρετῇ Δαναοὶ ῥήξαντο φάλαγγας 90

But at that time when the wood-cutter makes ready his supper
In the wooded glens of the mountains, when his arms and hands have had enough
From cutting down the tall trees, and his heart has come to satiety,
And longing for food and for sweet wine takes hold of his senses,
At that time the Danaans by their manhood broke the battalions…
11.86-90.

The simile is not one of the thirteen tree similes we have analyzed because the vehicle of comparison in the simile is not a tree, but rather the time of day, and it is a simile that is rarely discussed together with the tree similes because it is unclear if the scene is meant to mirror the battlefield, the Trojans, or the Achaeans. The simile on its own does not directly make the associations between tree-cutter and Achaean, or felled tree and Trojan, but, when read within its immediate and wider context, these associations, I argue, are made clear, and thus reinforce the link between Achaeans as destroyers of the Trojan world and add force of action to the words of Agamemnon discussed above. The simile directly compares the time of day: the time when the woodcutter "makes ready his supper" is the time that the Danaans "broke the battalions" of the Trojans. The simile is misdirecting in that we expect the fighting warriors (it is at this point in the simile unclear whether there is a distinction between Trojans

and Achaeans), like the woodcutter in the simile, to be tired at this point in the day, and to put an end to their fighting: it is in fact the opposite.[143]

The imagery of the simile centers on the tree-cutter and the felling of trees. The tree-cutter here is subject to fatigue, his "arms and hands have grown weary from cutting down the tall trees", δένδρεα μακρά. Trees being cut down of course recall the many felled trees we have seen in similes and in the narrative proper which are directly linked with the death of Trojans and the Trojan world, and so the image suggests the same associations. Even if we do not yet see clearly the link of trees to Trojans and tree-cutter to Achaeans, the image of tree-felling still recalls the death of soldiers. It comes as no surprise then that just before the simile begins, we are told that:

> ὄφρα μὲν ἠὼς ἦν καὶ ἀέξετο ἱερὸν ἦμαρ,
> τόφρα μάλ᾽ ἀμφοτέρων βέλε᾽ ἵπτετο, πῖπτε δὲ λαός.
>
> So long as it was early morning and the sacred daylight increasing,
> So long the weapons of both took hold and men dropped under them.[144]

As trees fall throughout the poem, so too here do the men drop, πῖπτε δὲ λαός.[145] So while the simile is focusing on the time of day, it is clear also that the felling of trees is associated with the death of soldiers—here it could refer to both Trojans and Achaeans. If we take this association into account, the simile takes a turn for the perverse: the tree-cutter has tired

[143] Meiggs 1982:108 notes that "This comes as a shock for we have been led to expect that the fighting men, like the woodcutter, would be weary and hungry by the evening and break off the battle, but the realism of this glimpse of the woodman's life obscures the weakness of the simile." I agree that we expect the fighting to cease, but I do not agree with Meiggs that the simile is weak: it is, in my opinion, a very intricate simile that interacts closely with the narrative context—as the following analysis will try to make clear.
[144] 11.84-5.
[145] Falling in the poem, when used of trees, always uses a form of the verb πίπτω or ἐρείπω.

himself out with cutting down tall trees, his heart has "had enough of it". We might expect the simile to translate, then, into the heroes/killers growing tired from killing enemy soldiers. But as mentioned above, the opposite is the case.

We jump back into the narrative at the point where the Achaeans have just broken through the Trojan defenses, ready to continue killing—they have not grown weary from battle. If we consider the tree-cutter in the simile as representing the Achaeans, which I suggest is the case, then the simile's misdirection must either be attributed to its weakness (as Meiggs argues), or interpreted as setting up and contributing to a sense of expectation, an expectation for the Achaeans to go on and kill Trojans until they are tired and sated in their hearts with killing.[146] I argue that the latter is the case, and that the simile is actually quite engaged in its immediate narrative context.

One moment that follows the simile closely serves to direct our attention back to the tree-cutter, reinforcing the reading that associates the Achaeans with the tree-cutter in the simile. Agamemnon kills Hippolochus, 11.145-47:

> Ἱππόλοχος δ᾽ ἀπόρουσε, τὸν αὖ χαμαὶ ἐξενάριξε
> χεῖρας ἀπὸ ξίφεϊ **τμήξας** ἀπό τ᾽ αὐχένα **κόψας**,
> **ὅλμον δ᾽ ὣς** ἔσσευε κυλίνδεσθαι δι᾽ ὁμίλου.
>
> Hippolochus sprang away, but he [Agamemnon] killed him dismounted,
> Cutting away his arms with a sword-stroke, free of the shoulder,
> And sent him spinning like a log down the battle.

[146] On the contrary, Stein 2016, 459-60: "The narrative suggests he [the woodcutter] stands for a Trojan because it is the Greek side that breaks through the Trojan line immediately after this simile." This seems to me a cursory reading of the passage. It is what unfolds in the 200-line sequence, including before and after the tree-cutter simile, that informs the reading and function of the simile, and so of the tree-cutter, as we shall see. For the supposed weakness of the simile, see above.

11.145-47.

Agamemnon turns the Trojan soldier into a log. Without ever directly becoming a tree-cutter, Agamemnon cuts down Hippolochus in such a way that he resembles an armless, branchless, log in death. This alone does not confirm the previous simile's function as we have argued, nor that we should associate the woodcutter with the Achaeans and Agamemnon—but analyzing the immediate context further illuminates the passage.

The opening 300 lines of Book 11 are dedicated to the aristeia of Agamemnon, beginning with his arming scene.[147] This is followed by the simile of the tree-cutter that focuses on the time of day (11.86-91), where, we recall, we are told that men were dropping so long as it was day and the daylight was increasing, ὄφρα μὲν ἠὼς ἦν καὶ ἀέξετο ἱερὸν ἦμαρ. What follows this simile is the rampage of Agamemnon, killing eight named Trojans (including Hippolochus), and countless unnamed as he chases them running towards the citadel.[148] The Achaean commander's assault ends when he is wounded by the last man he kills, Köon: the sore wound dries (11.267), the pain breaks in (11.268, 272), his heart becomes heavy (11.274), and he leaves the battlefield (11.273-4), calling out for the Achaeans to keep fighting, since Zeus would not let him continue the battle "daylong", πανημέριον (11.279). The entire sequence recalls the tree-cutter who has tired from cutting "tall trees", where the cut trees stand for (Trojan) warriors killed in battle, and the tree-cutter stands for Agamemnon. Like the tree-cutter, Agamemnon grows tired after so much killing

[147] 11.15-46.
[148] In order, Agamemnon kills Bienor (11.92), Oileus (93), Isos and Antiphus (101), Peisandrus (144), Hippolochus (145), Iphidamas (240), and Köon (260).

of Trojan soldiers, and is unable to fight all day long, not unlike the tree-cutter giving up his work to rest and eat.

Thus, the simile of the woodcutter in Book 11 may be misdirecting at first, yes, but upon further analysis, we can see that it is artfully deployed. The woodcutter again comes to stand in for an Achaean (as we expect from our analysis), Agamemnon, and we more clearly make this observation when we pay attention to the trees in the simile, which are often overlooked. Agamemnon, like the many other Achaeans in the *Iliad*, is associated with the image of the tree-cutter: he mirrors the tree-cutter's day-long work of cutting down trees by cutting down Trojan soldiers, and growing tired he gives up his work and retreats. Moreover, Agamemnon kills the Trojan Hippolochus in such a way that he resembles a cut tree in death. The words of Agamemnon to his brother Menelaus in Book 6 which express the Achaean commander's eagerness to extirpate and make "unseen" the Trojan people, even the fetuses in the womb, are enacted in his link to the image of the tree-cutter who all day long cuts down trees, putting a definitive end to the life of the tree and any possibility of future growth, even the unfurling of leaves.

Fire and Wildfires: Evoking the Cosmic Imagery of Conflagration

While we have seen the destruction of the Achaeans inherent in their link to the tree-cutter, perhaps an even more destructive image is that of the force of fire. Moreover, just as Agamemnon wishes to make the Trojans "unseen", fire often carries the epithet *aidelos,* "making unseen". It is fitting, then, that fire is an image that is most closely associated with

the Achaeans and with the sacking of Troy. Many scholars have commented on the proleptic force of fire for the destruction of the city of Troy, but by performing a close analysis of wildfire similes and connecting the imagery of fire with the tree imagery that we have already discussed, we can see that, once again, the imagery of the destruction of the natural world functions not only for the narrative purpose of the *Iliad*, but also resonates with the wider epic tradition. Indeed, it is precisely the wildfire similes that most forcefully collapse both cosmic and present time into one image: conflagration signals a change in world orders while the devastation of trees reflects the death of the Trojans.

We will begin with a brief analysis of the wildfire similes before discussing fire in general in the poem. There are four wildfire similes in the *Iliad*, three of which are used to describe the Achaeans, and one used of the Trojans.[149] The first is a simile we noted back in Chapter 1 which marks the brilliance of the Achaean army, marshaled together for the first time in the poem after having been dissuaded from setting sail and abandoning the war effort. Just before the wildfire simile Athena puts strength into the Achaean army, and "now battle became sweeter to them than to go back / in their hollow ships to the beloved land of their fathers", underscoring the eagerness for war of the Achaeans.[150] The gleam of the Achaean army is compared to fire (2.455-58):

ἠΰτε πῦρ ἀΐδηλον ἐπιφλέγει ἄσπετον ὕλην
οὔρεος ἐν κορυφῇς, ἔκαθεν δέ τε φαίνεται αὐγή,
ὣς τῶν ἐρχομένων ἀπὸ χαλκοῦ θεσπεσίοιο
αἴγλη παμφανόωσα δι᾽ αἰθέρος οὐρανὸν ἷκε.

[149] Of Achaeans: 2.45-8, 11.155, 20.490-94; of Trojans: 15.605. The simile used of the Trojans is the proverbial exception that marks the rule: it is used of Hector in Book 15 where he literally casts fire on an Achaean ship, thus performing the pivotal action that instigates the events that will ultimately cause his death (entry of Patroclus into battle, his death, and the return of Achilles to battle).
[150] 2.453-54.

As obliterating (aidelon) fire lights up a vast forest (aspeton hulen)
Along the crests of a mountain, and the flare shows far off,
So as they marched, from the magnificent bronze the gleam went
Dazzling all about through the upper air to heaven.

2.455-58.

As we noted earlier, the epithet of fire here, *aidelon*, means literally "making unseen", obliterating from view, which mirrors the desire of Agamemnon to make the Trojans "unseen", *aphantoi*. The epithet of the forest, on the other hand, is *aspetos*, literally "unspeakable"; that is an "unspeakable" amount, and so also "vast" or "boundless". This presents an interesting clash of forces: an obliterating fire against an unspeakably vast forest. The epithets set up a seemingly impossible contest. They suggest a stalemate, or perhaps a suspended struggle for the one element to destroy and the other to survive—a more than fitting depiction of the Achaeans on the one hand, the Trojans on the other, especially given the fact that, in the narrative of the poem, no end to the war is reached. On the narrative level, then, the link between Achaeans and fire and the Trojans and trees follows the pattern of Achaeans as destroyers of Trojan nature which we continue to explore.

On the cosmic level, however, the wildfire simile resonates with the conflagration of Gaia in Hesiod's *Theogony*, as we argued in Chapter 1. As we recall, when Zeus finally enters the battle in the Titanomachy, he sets the world on fire:

ἀμφὶ δὲ γαῖα φερέσβιος ἐσμαράγιζε
καιομένη, λάκε δ᾽ ἀμφὶ πυρὶ μεγάλ᾽ ἄσπετος ὕλη.
ἔζεε δὲ χθὼν πᾶσα καὶ Ὠκεανοῖο ῥέεθρα 695
πόντος τ᾽ ἀτρύγετος…

> The life-giving earth (Gaia) burned and resounded all over,
> and the vast forest (aspetos hule) crackled, consumed by fire.
> The whole earth (chthon pasa) boiled and the streams of Ocean
> and the barren sea...
>
> *Th*. 693-96

The same epithet is given to the forest, *aspetos*, and it too is set on fire. Moreover, Zeus again sets the world on fire when he defeats Typhoeus:

> φλὸξ δὲ κεραυνωθέντος ἀπέσσυτο τοῖο ἄνακτος
> οὔρεος ἐν βήσσῃσιν ἀιδνῇς παιπαλοέσσῃς, 860
> πληγέντος. πολλὴ δὲ πελώρη καίετο γαῖα
> ἀτμῇ θεσπεσίῃ καὶ ἐτήκετο κασσίτερος ὡς…
>
> The flame from the thunder-smitten lord
> leapt along the dark and rocky woodlands
> of the mountain, and the infernal blasts of the flames
> set much of the giant earth on fire until it melted like tin...
>
> *Th*. 859-62.

I suggest that these images of cosmic conflagration are evoked in the wildfire similes and place the *Iliad* in dialogue with these moments of cosmic significance in the wider epic tradition. The simile is used of the Achaeans as they arm themselves for war for the first time in the poem and is followed by the catalogue of ships, a poetic device that works to *replay* the first day the Achaean army set foot all together in Troy nine years ago.[151] This moment in Book 2 of the poem *is* the beginning of the Trojan war as far as the *Iliad*'s narrative is

[151] Cairns 2001; Kullmann 2001; Bergren 2008.

concerned, the beginning of a war marked in epic tradition and cosmic time as one of the two wars that destroy the generation of heroes. The wildfire simile marks this moment of cosmic significance.

A second wildfire simile is suitably used of Agamemnon during his aristeia in Book 11:

> ὡς δ᾽ ὅτε **πῦρ ἀΐδηλον** ἐν ἀξύλῳ ἐμπέσῃ ὕλῃ, 155
> πάντῃ τ᾽ εἰλυφόων ἄνεμος φέρει, οἳ δέ τε θάμνοι
> πρόρριζοι πίπτουσιν ἐπειγόμενοι πυρὸς ὁρμῇ·
> ὣς ἄρ᾽ ὑπ᾽ Ἀτρεΐδῃ Ἀγαμέμνονι πῖπτε κάρηνα
> Τρώων φευγόντων…
>
> As when obliterating (*aidelon*) fire comes down on the timbered forest
> And the roll of the wind carries it everywhere, and bushes
> Leaning under the force of the fire's rush tumble uprooted (*prorrhizoi*),
> So before Atreus' son Agamemnon went down the high heads
> Of the running Trojans…
>
> 11.155-59.

Here again the epithet of fire, *aidelon*, is especially fitting for Agamemnon who desires to make the Trojans *aphantoi*. Moreover, not only is the simile one of a wildfire in a forest as before, but the specifically named bushes (*thamnoi*) are said to tumble "uprooted", *prorrhizoi*, beneath the fire just as the "high heads of running Trojans" beneath the onslaught of Agamemnon. The image of bushes crackling and tumbling "roots and all"[152] from the earth recalls, too, the utter destruction that the Achaeans wish to bring upon the Trojan world

[152] Cunliffe 1977, 345: "from the roots onwards, by the roots, roots and all".

and the threat they pose to the *future* of any possibility of Trojan life. In this simile, then, not only is the cosmic imagery of conflagration evoked, but careful detail is given that serves the narrative purpose of the *Iliad* and highlights the depiction of Achaeans as destroyers of the Trojan natural world.

One more simile is used of the Achaeans, this time of Achilles in his return to battle and to the killing of men. As he cuts his way through the Trojan army, Achilles is compared to a wildfire:

> ὡς δ᾽ ἀναμαιμάει βαθέ᾽ ἄγκεα **θεσπιδαὲς πῦρ** 490
> οὔρεος ἀζαλέοιο, βαθεῖα δὲ καίεται ὕλη,
> πάντῃ τε κλονέων ἄνεμος φλόγα εἰλυφάζει,
> ὣς ὅ γε πάντῃ θῦνε σὺν ἔγχεϊ δαίμονι ἶσος
> κτεινομένους ἐφέπων, ῥέε δ᾽ αἵματι γαῖα μέλαινα.
>
> As inhuman (thespidaes) fire sweeps on in fury through the deep angles
> Of a drywood mountain (oureos azaleoio) and sets ablaze the depth of the timber,
> And the blustering wind lashes the flame along, so Achilles
> Swept everywhere with his spear like something more than a mortal (daimoni isos)
> Harrying them as they died, and the black earth ran blood.
>
> 20.490-94.

Just like the previous one, this simile not only resonates with the imagery of conflagration as a whole, but is also carefully nuanced to reflect the immediate narrative context. The desperate and unstoppable nature of Achilles' killing of Trojans is reflected in the language

of the simile. The fire is said to be *thespidaes*, "defying human efforts",[153] just as Achilles is said to be *daimoni isos*, "like a divinity", or more likely, "like something beyond a mortal". Thus, both the fire in the simile and Achilles in the narrative are said to be *more than* human, *beyond* the reach of mortals and reaching closer to the realm of the divine. Moreover, the mountain upon which the fire blazes through the "deep wood" is described as *azaleos*, "dry", reflecting the ease and speed with which Achilles mows down the Trojan soldiers in his path.

The wildfire similes in the *Iliad* resonate with cosmic images of conflagration in the wider epic tradition, imagery of the destruction of the natural world that signals critical moments in the history of the cosmos and places the events of the *Iliad* within that tradition and history. But the poet of the *Iliad* also configures the wildfire simile as a vehicle for the narrative purpose of the poem: by linking the world of trees to the Trojans and the symbol of fire to the Achaeans—contrasting imagery that is attracted by each based on their position in cosmic history—the wildfire imagery contributes to the closeness of the Trojans with the natural world and of the Achaeans with the destruction of it. Furthermore, the devastation wrought by fire mirrors the desires of the Achaean Agamemnon: the power of fire to make what it touches disappear enacts his wish to make the Trojans "unseen".

Fire is not only present within the wildfire similes; it is present in many ways throughout the entirety of the poem. As early as 2.415 Agamemnon prays to Zeus to let him hurl Priam's palace blazing and set it to "fire's destruction". At 6.331, Hector tells Paris to rise in order to prevent their city being burned in destructive fire. These and other statements by the narrator and the characters of the poem present clearly the threat of fire to Troy, but

[153] Cunliffe 1977, 189: on difficulty of translation.

fire is also the ultimate threat for the Achaeans: at 8.217 Hector threatens the Achaean ships with flame, but Hera inspires Agamemnon to lead a defense; at 9.242, Odysseus relates to Achilles the threat that Hector poses in the burning of their ships with fire; at 9.347, Achilles responds that the Achaeans must take counsel how to prevent the ravaging flame; and at 9.653, Achilles tells the embassy to go back with a message, including that he will not fight until the ships (of the Myrmidons) are set on fire. Fire not only threatens the land and citadel of the Trojans, but also threatens to burn the ships of the Achaeans and thus their only means to return back home.

The employment of fire in the *Iliad* is most thoroughly discussed by Whitman, who links all uses of this element in the poem to its narrative structure and poetic purpose.[154] In sum, Whitman argues that fire and its associations are symbolic of two things: Zeus' will (and to some extent that of Achilles) and the destruction of the Trojan city. As stated before, that fire is proleptic of the destruction of the city of Troy has long been acknowledged by scholars and is clearly stated in the poem itself by both Trojans and Achaeans.[155] In my analysis, I have tried to place specifically wildfires within the larger epic tradition and show the ways in which the *Iliad* both evokes and places itself within that tradition, but also redeploys the imagery to show the destruction of the Trojan world through the depiction of nature being destroyed. We have also explored in passing, as Whitman argues, fire as a symbol of Zeus' will. As Whitman's analysis suggests, the will of Zeus can be seen to be expressed in the *Iliad* through fire as a byproduct of lightning.[156]

[154] Whitman 1965.
[155] Recently Mackie 2008.
[156] Whitman 1965: 128-53.

For the purposes of this dissertation, we have also taken on this premise of fire as symbol of Zeus' will. We have explored in Chapter 1 how the conflagration of Gaia in the *Theogony* has accompanied the two critical moments in cosmic history in which Zeus, lightning and thunder in hand, has defeated both the older generation of Titans and the new generation of Typhoeus. It is just so that moments of cosmic significance are usually announced by Gaia and enacted by Zeus. Moreover, we analyzed the ways in which the Achaeans in Book 2 of the *Iliad* represent the will of Zeus in the simile of Typhoeus: the gleam of their armor is compared to the earth being "eaten by fire" and the clamor beneath their feet is compared to the noise made by Gaia when Zeus batters the earth around Typhoeus in anger. The connection between Achaeans and the will of Zeus is further supported by the fact that the Achaeans have marshaled for war through the careful planning of Zeus who sent a false dream to Agamemnon that very morning, and by Achilles saying that the Achaeans "administer the justice of Zeus".[157]

Thus, the wildfire similes not only place the events of the *Iliad* in the wider epic tradition, they mark these events as a moment of cosmic significance that is reflected in fire as the symbol of Zeus' will and of change in the history of the cosmos. While the Trojan people are fated to die, cut down, uprooted, and set aflame like the natural world to which they are so closely tied, the cosmic significance of the war is that Achaeans, too, will be wiped out and made "unseen" from the world.

The End of the Trojan World

[157] 1.237-39.

The *Iliad* in no uncertain terms foreshadows the death of Hector and the destruction of the city of Troy, the latter of which lies beyond the scope of the poem's narrative, through the proleptic image of fire, as we have just seen, and through the words of characters on both the Achaean and Trojan side. But the end of the Trojan world is also announced, I argue, through imagery that depicts the destruction of the natural world, a world that is so closely woven together with Trojan identity in the poem. This devastation and conflagration of the natural world evoke previous moments of cosmic significance and thus collapse them upon the *Iliad*'s narrative time. While we have seen the imagery of trees felled, uprooted, and burned, both in the figural world of simile and in the narrative action, and we have seen Trojan youths named after the rivers of Troy killed in action—the only evidence of their lives in the very descriptions of their deaths—two episodes in the poem definitively herald the death and end of the Trojan world: the semi-death of Hector as an oak tree felled by Zeus' lightning and the burning of the river-god Scamander.

We have already touched briefly on the tree simile used of Hector's pseudo-death in Book 14 of the *Iliad*, hinting at the significance of this moment in which Hector, oak tree, and Zeus' lightning all come together. As the Achaeans fight to protect their ships from the Trojans setting fire to them, Ajax hits Hector with a huge stone, spinning him "like a top", and his fall is compared to that of an oak tree (14.414-20). As we have already seen, the simile is unique in various ways: of the tree similes, it is the only tree to be "root-torn", the only one to produce a smell, and the only to be struck by the lightning of Zeus in the poem. The description of the tree's fall as *prorrhizos*, "roots and all", recalls the bushes in the

wildfire simile used of Agamemnon in Book 11, which also fall *prorrhizoi*.[158] But certainly the most significant aspect of the simile is that the tree is an oak that is felled by the lightning of Zeus.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the oak tree is the tree of "Zeus aegis-bearer", and is particularly linked to the divine. Moreover, we also know that the oak tree that stands in the plain of Troy can be thought of as metonymically representing the defensive qualities both of Troy (the formulation "the Scaean gates and the oak tree") and of the Trojan army on the battlefield (narrative function). If we attend to these elements, Hector himself can be thought of as linked closely to the oak tree of Zeus, not only because he is a favorite mortal of the son of Cronus,[159] but also because he represents the defense of Troy, the one who "alone saved Ilion".[160] From this perspective, the semantic shades of the image of the oak tree converge in this one simile to a devastating effect: Zeus, whose will upon the cosmos effects progress and change by means of his lightning and thunder, here strikes the Trojan oak, fully uprooting it from the earth.[161] Zeus' divine protection of Troy, the natural and cultural defense of the Scaean gates, and the human defender of Troy are all devastated in this one simile; the Trojan world is defenseless.

While the figural uprooting of the oak tree by the lightning and thunder of Zeus symbolically marks the beginning of the end for the Trojan world, this devastation is brought

[158] On the contrary, see the immovability and deep roots of the oak trees depicted in the tree simile used of the Achaeans Leonteus and Polypoites, 12.127-36.
[159] 22.168-72, Zeus on Hector's imminent death: "Ah me, this is a man beloved who now my eyes watch / being chased around the wall; my heart is mourning for Hector / who has burned in my honor many thigh pieces of oxen / on the peaks of Ida with all her folds, or again on the uttermost / part of the citadel…"
[160] 6.403.
[161] Rood 2008: 26: "Only Zeus can uproot his sacred oak tree; similarly Zeus must ultimately allow Hector, whom he loves, to be killed (22.166-185)."

to bear through the literal conflagration of the river-god Scamander in *Iliad* 21. The function and significance of Scamander in the poem and his close connection to the Trojan people and their land have recently been explored by Brooke Holmes.[162] Holmes argues that Scamander is not only motivated to fight against Achilles because he is angry and offended at how Achilles has polluted his flowing water with corpses, but also because of the river-god's *kourotrophic* function towards the Trojan people.[163] That is, Scamander is both a latent fixture of the geographic space of the Trojan plain[164] *and* a figure of care in an affective relationship with the Trojan people.

Furthermore, this river sustains not only the Trojan people but also the non-human biotic world within its waters and along its fertile banks. As Holmes notes, the defeat of Scamander by fire not only "anticipates the city's fiery destruction, but also begins to enact it" and "when Hephaestus descends on the river, his fire consumes the entire ecosystem it supports".[165] Here is the passage in question (21.350-55):

καίοντο πτελέαι τε καὶ ἰτέαι ἠδὲ μυρῖκαι,
καίετο δὲ λωτός τε ἰδὲ θρύον ἠδὲ κύπειρον,
τὰ περὶ καλὰ ῥέεθρα ἅλις ποταμοῖο πεφύκει·
τείροντ' ἐγχέλυές τε καὶ ἰχθύες οἳ κατὰ δίνας,
οἳ κατὰ καλὰ ῥέεθρα κυβίστων ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα
πνοιῇ τειρόμενοι πολυμήτιος Ἡφαίστοιο.

The elms burned, and the willows and the tamarisks.
The clover burned, and the rushes, and the galingale,

[162] Holmes 2015.
[163] Holmes 2015: 42-51.
[164] *Il*. 2.459-68, 5.36, 5.774, 7.329, 11.499.
[165] Holmes 2015: 46-47.

> all the plants that grew abundantly beside the streams of the river;
> the eels were suffering, and the fish in the eddies,
> who leapt to and fro through the lovely streams
> afflicted by the blast of Hephaestus, well-furnished with resources.
>
> 21.350-55.

As is clear, the conflagration of Scamander is not only proleptic of the death of Troy, but of the literal death of the total Trojan environment.

Beyond the river-god's connection to the Trojan people and the sustenance of life on the Trojan plain, we may recall the particular connection between rivers of Troy and Trojan youths. As we discussed in Chapter 2, there are four Trojan soldiers who are named after the rivers of Troy, two of which (Simoeisius and Satnius) are explicitly said to have been born next to the banks of said river and thus were named after them.[166] Holmes notes this close connection of rivers to heroes, saying that "We have considerable evidence, starting from Homer and running through late antiquity, that rivers in ancient Greece were believed to exercise a protective function, particularly with regard to the young".[167] Holmes also notes the passage during Patroclus' funeral where Achilles cuts off the lock of hair which he was growing to dedicate to the river Spercheius on his safe return home, but since that is no longer possible, he dedicates it instead to Patroclus.[168]

[166] 4.473-89, 14.442-48.
[167] Holmes 2015: 45; Holmes also cites Larson 2001: "In archaic thought, the local river often stands in preference to district or town as a man's birthplace. Heroes are conceived and born beside a river, which thereafter represents the land of their nurture and is an important focus of their loyalty and identity."
[168] 23.141-51. So too Graziosi and Haubold 2010: 192.

Thus, Scamander stands as a literal protector and care-giver of Troy and the Trojan world, and while his defeat in fire is an ominous vision of the sack of Troy and destruction of the Trojan world, it can also be interpreted as a symbolic death of one Trojan youth in particular: the son of Hector and Andromache, Astyanax, the boy "whom Hector called Scamandrius".[169] Just as the deaths of Simoeisius and Satnius evoke the death of or the disconnection from the rivers after which they take their names, so too now does the conflagration of the twice named Xanthus/Scamander evoke the death of the similarly twice named Astyanax/Scamandrius. As the defeat of Scamander seems to "clear the path to Troy's destruction",[170] and thus preclude its continuity, so too then in the death of the child Scamandrius is the future of Troy lost. We recall once again the words of Agamemnon to his brother Menelaus to kill every single Trojan, even the fetus yet in his mother's womb, which in the defeat of Scamander we may perceive to be the very death of such a young child, the symbol of a future for the Trojan people.

Conclusion: Future(s) Uncertain

We have seen how the destruction of the natural world is directly linked to the death of the Trojan world, a destruction evoked through the Typhoeus simile which collapses the narrative of cosmic progress, and thus of the destruction and conflagration of the natural world, upon the Iliadic present. The chopping down of trees, the wildfires that blaze through

[169] 6.402. Holmes mentions this link but does not explicate the possible ramifications of it.
[170] Holmes 2015: 43.

forests, and the conflagration of the river Scamander at the hands of the Achaeans not only resonate within the wider epic tradition of cosmic destruction, but also definitively mark the death of the Trojan world in the present. But the kind of destruction that is depicted—trees being uprooted and felled without possibility of future growth, in stark contrast with the leaf imagery which depicts life and death as cyclical and continuous—or that is envisaged by some characters—for instance, Agamemnon when he orders his brother to kill even the child still in his mother's womb—goes beyond just the present moment. The totality of imagery that depicts the devastation of the natural world in the poem suggests a wholesale erasure of the Trojan people, a glimpse into the *non*future of Troy, a continuity that is *not* in store for their people or their culture. The poetry of Homer links together the Trojans and their environment in ways that invite us to consider them as an interconnected entity; upon the destruction of that environment, Trojan death is doubly devastating and its consequences irrevocable, and vice-versa. However, viewed in the cosmic perspective which the poem also presents, the imagery of the natural world suggests that while the Trojans, and ultimately the Achaeans together with the generation of heroes, will die, "Nature" will persist beyond this moment: Gaia is most alive as she flows with the blood of the dead, while the obliterating fire and the boundless forest are locked in an eternal stalemate of destruction and survival.

Chapter 4

Earth and Water: Life after Troy

Introduction

In the last chapter we analyzed the ways in which imagery of the destruction of the natural world is deployed in the present narrative of the *Iliad*, through similes and eventually enacted in the present action. On the one hand, the similes of wildfires and tree cutting clearly designate Trojans as closely connected to the natural world, and Achaeans as violent destroyers of that world. On the other hand, the burning of the river-god Scamander and the mass felling of oak trees for the funeral of Patroclus shifts Achaeans into real destroyers of the natural world, enacting and fulfilling their role in the similes. Moreover, the destruction of the natural world in simile and narrative action is an important part of the storytelling of the *Iliad*, as in its depiction is encoded a link to cosmic myth and time as we argued in Chapter 1. The destruction of the natural world thus marks the events of the poem as significant within a continuum of mythic and cosmic time and space, while being itself redeployed in the poem of Homer to achieve the poet's individual poetic and narrative ends, one of those being the characterization and motivation of Achaeans and Trojans.

Furthermore, I have argued that in its depiction of the human-environment relationship the *Iliad* suggests that the distinct temporal spaces of past, present, and future elicit unique kinds of interactions between humans and the natural world. These distinct interactions in time invite us to think about the significance of human relationships with the natural world and the implications or consequences upon the narrative and its characters in

the poem. For example, I have argued that in the present action of the poem this relationship between humans and the environment is one of destruction: on the one hand, the Trojans are closely connected to the natural world symbolically and linguistically (e.g., the Trojan youths named after the rivers of Troy, the power of the oak tree next to the Scaean gates), and on the other hand the Achaeans are shown to decimate this same natural world in simile and in action as we outlined above. This relationship of human destruction defines the events of the present narrative of the poem, events that replay the cosmic destruction and devastation of Gaia and the greater natural world as seen in Hesiod's *Theogony* and evoked by the simile of Typhoeus in Book 2 of the *Iliad*.

The poem also suggests that the relationship between humans and the natural world in a time *prior to* the events of the *Iliad* is itself distinct; whereas in the present humans destroy the natural world and Trojans are connected to the environment symbolically and figuratively, the past reveals a relationship between humans and the natural world that is practical, interdependent, and constructive. For example, the Trojan daughters who used to wash clothes in the twin springs of Scamander "before the Achaeans came" to Troy, the careful cutting of the fig tree's branch by Lykaon to make rails for his chariot, and the funeral of Eëtion in which mingle together human enemies and the nymph daughters of Zeus, who then plant elm trees atop Eëtion's funeral pyre. These moments are all defined by being placed into the past, at least a past that precedes the events of the *Iliad*: the washing of clothes is placed in a time before the war, the funeral of Eëtion takes place during an earlier time in the war, and Lykaon is said to have been captured by Achilles as he cut the fig tree's branches recently, as Achilles recognizes the young Trojan and realizes he has returned to battle. All of these moments are placed in an unreachable past and detail relationships

between humans and the natural world that can no longer be sustained in the present, where devastation and conflagration of the environment define the poem's time and space.

However, as far as the poem glimpses back into the past, so too does it look forward to the future, a time after the events of the *Iliad*. While I argued in the last chapter that the imagery of the natural world being destroyed in the present *implies* consequences for the future of Trojans and Achaeans as seen especially in the imagery of trees and leaves, the poem also describes moments and events that clearly take place in the future, beyond the narrative time and space of the *Iliad*, and provide once again a look at the relationship between the human and the natural worlds. In this chapter I will argue that just as the human-environment relationship can be assessed in the context of past and present, so too can it be assessed in the context of the future. Whereas the present action of the *Iliad* is defined by human destruction of the environment, the future reveals itself to be the inverse of this relationship: defined by the destruction and concealment of the *human* world by means of the natural.

In thinking about how the human-environment relationship reveals itself in the future we will first look at various tombs that appear on the Trojan plain or are mentioned as either located in a far-away place or in an imagined future, and think about the human artifact of the tomb both as a signifier of the past and as an object which is witness to and evidence of the passage of time: of past, present, and future. We will then move to the elaboration of the destruction of the Achaean wall in a time after the war, after many heroes have died and the Achaeans have left the shores of Troy. What I hope to show is, on the one hand, that human fears of oblivion find fulfillment in the future and, on the other hand, that it is the natural world that imposes itself and encroaches upon the human world to this very end.

Furthermore, I hope to show that the *Iliad* suggests not only that the human world and its monuments are subject to passive decay (as Garcia argues, more below), but that aspects of the environment like earth and water are shown to have agency in their own right, bringing willful and intentional destruction upon the human world.

Water threatens to destroy violently the works of humans, while the earth slowly conceals any evidence of human presence. The future is one that marches on without human involvement, with even the trace of a human footprint erased and subsumed by the natural world. When taken together, the human-environment relationship presented in Homer's *Iliad* suggests a continuum of interaction that moves from one extreme to the other: from productive collaboration to a destructive separation, and puts forth an apocalyptic future that reveals the consequences of all-consuming, violent warfare, and the devastation of the environment. Moreover, the combined forces of the numerous rivers of Troy during the destruction of the Achaean wall remind us of the cosmic implications of the natural world and destruction: from the guttural beginnings of Gaia's groans that ushered in the war in Iliadic time and space, to the immense force of the ancient rivers putting an end to war by erasing the final human monument in Troy. Here again earth and water not only link the poem and its events to a cosmic past, but look forward as well to a cosmic future.

The σήματα of the Iliad

One important symbol and artifact of the past is the tomb, the physical marker and memorial of the life and death of mortals. However, tombs are unique in that not only do

they represent the *past* life of someone now passed away, but the physical monument itself, over time, bears witness to and is evidence of the *passage* of time. That is, as symbol, the tomb as grave-marker represents the past; as physical object, the tomb shows signs of the years that have passed through the wear and tear of external factors like weather and other interactions with the natural world around it. In this way, the tomb can be seen to have embedded in it a continuum of time, from past to present, and as such demonstrates a movement from present to future as well:[171] where once a tomb may have been recognized and acknowledged in human memory and history as representative of one thing, at another time in the future the purpose of this very tomb may slip into oblivion, may slip from the historical account of mortals and the physical monument itself be obscured or destroyed.

Garcia's monograph on the durability and decay of objects in the *Iliad* is especially instructive here. Garcia writes that objects such as tombs in the poem have a "temporal durability" whose "rate of decay marks time, and the objects themselves function like windows to the past and future".[172] He goes on to say that mounds and grave markers "indicate the past within the present", and that inevitably tombs will "fade over time…eventually they will be forgotten and become indistinguishable from the land itself".[173] For Garcia, tombs and other such monuments are not just memorials for the human characters of the poem, but are also representative of the oral tradition, both of which are always in a process that moves from a present state of temporary preservation (i.e., the poem and its narrative time and space) to an eventual disintegration in the future. This

[171] As Dr. Christensen has pointed out to me, in this sense the tomb is both diachronic and prospective: it illustrates the passage of time with an expectation of continuity into the future.
[172] Garcia 2013: 131 and treated more fully in 131-159.
[173] Garcia 2013: 132.

disintegration, or "decay", of monuments is indicative of the failure of (an) oral tradition and/or a failure of memory.[174] While I agree with Garcia's study of human objects, their durability, and their decay over time, my focus is not so much with these monuments as stand-ins for the project of the oral tradition, or even the mere possibility of their decay (and so in the case of tombs their failure as such), but rather the *means by which* this decay comes about, and the agency of the natural world within this dynamic. That is, taken together with an analysis of the human-environment relationship in the past and present, this same relationship in a "not yet" future, as described by Garcia, reveals an earth that *intentionally* conceals and subsumes the human tomb. Thus, rather than the passive decay of tombs in the *Iliad*, my concern is on their being concealed or becoming a *part of* something else. That is to say, my focus is on the agency and intention of the earth as an aspect of the environment rather than the passivity of the tomb over time. The earth subsumes human tombs unto itself in a future where the natural world reclaims the Trojan land.

One of the earliest and perhaps most interesting tombs that appears in the *Iliad* is one around which gather Hector and the Trojan allies in Book 2 of the poem, a tomb which the narrator tells us men refer to as "Bramble Hill", but the gods remember as the "tomb of far-bounding Myrine":

> ἔστι δέ τις προπάροιθε πόλιος αἰπεῖα κολώνη
> ἐν πεδίῳ ἀπάνευθε περίδρομος ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα,
> τὴν ἤτοι ἄνδρες Βατίειαν κικλήσκουσιν,
> ἀθάνατοι δέ τε σῆμα πολυσκάρθμοιο Μυρίνης·

[174] Garcia 2013: 155.

ἔνθα τότε Τρῶές τε διέκριθεν ἠδ᾽ ἐπίκουροι. 815

There is in front of the city but apart from it some steep hill
In the plain by itself, so you pass one side or the other.
Men call it Bramble hill,
But the immortal gods call it the tomb of far-bounding Myrine.
There the Trojans and their companions were marshalled in order.

Il. 2.811-15.

As Grethlein notes, the importance of tombs in the *Iliad* lies in their "referring to the past and their geographical use" as points of orientation for the narrator and the Trojans.[175] While this is evident in the marshalling of the Trojans to this specific site, one detail in its description stands apart: the Trojan ἄνδρες know and refer to the tomb as just a hill (however unique), while only the gods, ἀθάνατοι, (and the narrator) know the hill as a tomb and memorial of the past. This discrepancy in knowledge and memory, and the failure of the monument's function over time, is an example of the real possibility of the human slipping into oblivion through the encroachment of the natural world, its original human meaning known only to the gods themselves who are not subject to the passage of time.

Not only has the function of the tomb as memorial failed in human terms and thus its meaning become negated, but the human artifact has become something entirely different; rather, it has become a part of something else, a part of the natural world, an aspect of the environment with no history or meaning prescribed to it besides being a bramble-laden hill on the Trojan plain.[176] While this is itself meaning*ful* in terms of the hill's function in the

[175] Grethlein 2008: 28.
[176] Grethlein 2008, 31: "…artefact has become nature".

poem's narrative as a landmark on the battlefield, what Grethlein per Chapman refers to as a "timemark", a space that is "experientially and socially charged",[177] it is meaningful as such only as a result of the loss of the tomb's original function and meaning. This is a consequence of the passage of time and presumably of the overgrowth of bramble bushes, *batos*, upon the tomb. Furthermore, whereas we have seen that the human and natural worlds function in an interdependent relationship in the past, and in the present this relationship is defined by human destruction of the natural world, the example of the tomb suggests that over time the natural world will persevere at the *expense of* the human, that human meaning and creation may be encroached upon by and become a part of the natural world. Thus, this example is not a neat coming-together of human and nature—as we have seen earlier in the funeral of Eëtion—but of the gradual concealment of the one by the other.[178]

The loss of meaning in the above example occurs through a combination of the failure of human memory and the physical change of the tomb over time obscuring the human monument visually. As a result, the Trojan people have (re)named the hill as "Bramble", Βατίεια, which will then presumably be passed down in human memory and history as such. This "slippage", if you will, on a linguistic level threatens to occur in another example, the tomb of Aipytos, named during the catalogue of the ships of the Achaeans and their allies in *Iliad* 2:

οἳ δ᾽ ἔχον Ἀρκαδίην ὑπὸ Κυλλήνης ὄρος αἰπὺ

[177] Chapman 1997: 43; Grethlein 2008: 28.
[178] Garcia 2013, 152: "The *Iliad* offers us a brief glimpse of a mis-read sign; the large *tumbos* 'grave mound' piled over the Amazonian fighter has been mistaken for a natural feature of the landscape".

Αἰπύτιον παρὰ τύμβον ἵν᾽ ἀνέρες ἀγχιμαχηταί…

They who held Arcadia beneath the steep hill of Kyllene,
Next to the tomb of Aipytos, where men fight at close quarters…

Il. 2.603-04.

On a linguistic level, the "steep hill" of Kyllene, the ὄρος **αἰπύ**, mirrors the tomb of Aipytos, the **Αἰπύ**τιον τύμβον.[179] But does the hero Aipytos give his name to the steep hill, or does the nature of the hill as steep influence the naming of the hero?[180] Does it matter?[181] Whereas in the previous example the tomb of Myrine garners a completely different name in the human present, here the landscape and the hero Aipytos share the same root on a linguistic level: the name of the hero can be seen as an expansion of the adjective αἰπύ. The problem may arise, over time as with the tomb of Myrine, that the two—the natural environment and the human artifact—become one, especially here given that they are similar on a linguistic level, resulting in the possibility of the signifier replacing its referent. And as with the tomb of Myrine, meaning may be lost not for the "steep hill", but for the Αἰπύτιον τύμβον, the tomb of the"steep hero". As such, once again we see the threat of human memory and meaning slipping into oblivion in the future, as time marches on, with the natural world slowly

[179] Grethlein 2008, 30: "The epithet of the landscape is picked up by the name of the hero; not only is the place signified by nature, the steep hill, as well as by a human artifact, the tomb, but their linguistic similarity seems to erase the boundary between them."
[180] See, for example, the naming of Trojan youths after rivers next to which they are born in Ch. 2 above, and Fenno 2005: 482-488 below.
[181] Kirk 1984 says of this connection that though "remarkable", it is "probably not significant", even if the singer may have "liked it when it occurred to him" (216). While this may be true—that the closeness of αἰπὺ and Αἰπύτιον was significant at an oral, performative level—to dismiss the connection as mere coincidence seems to me unnecessarily to foreclose further interpretation. When seen in connection with other tombs that are subject to encroachment and concealment by the earth over time, the tomb of Aipytos can be seen to be doubly threatened by this encroachment on a physical and linguistic level.

encroaching upon the human. This example shows us a potential erasure of boundaries on a linguistic level between human and nature, and this failure of tombs to preserve their meaning into the future creeps into their presence throughout the rest of the poem, even when they are merely imagined.

In *Iliad* 7 the Trojans and Achaeans come together, through the machinations of Athena and Apollo, to choose two warriors to fight in a one-on-one encounter that will put an end to the fighting for the day. Hector emerges as the Trojan champion and as he puts forth the terms of combat, he imagines winning glory for himself that extends beyond the present moment into the future:

> τὸν δὲ νέκυν ἐπὶ νῆας ἐϋσσέλμους ἀποδώσω,
> ὄφρά ἑ ταρχύσωσι κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοί,
> σῆμά τέ οἱ χεύωσιν ἐπὶ πλατεῖ Ἑλλησπόντῳ.
> καί ποτέ τις εἴπῃσι καὶ ὀψιγόνων ἀνθρώπων
> νηΐ πολυκλήϊδι πλέων ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον:
> ἀνδρὸς μὲν τόδε σῆμα πάλαι κατατεθνηῶτος,
> ὅν ποτ᾽ ἀριστεύοντα κατέκτανε φαίδιμος Ἕκτωρ.
> ὥς ποτέ τις ἐρέει: τὸ δ᾽ ἐμὸν κλέος οὔ ποτ᾽ ὀλεῖται.
>
> *Il*. 7.84-91.

> But I will give back his corpse among the well-benched ships
> So that the flowing-haired Achaeans may give him his due rites
> And heap up a burial mound upon him on the wide Hellespont.
> And someday someone will say of men born in the future,
> Who sails in his many-benched ship upon the wine-dark sea:
> “This is the tomb of a man who died long ago,
> Whom, once being the best, brilliant Hector killed”.
> Thus will he speak someday, and my glory shall never perish.

Il. 7.84-91.

Hector imagines that the tomb of his Achaean victim will persist into the future and bring him further glory when it is recognized as a symbol of his (expected) victory in the present moment. He places us into the imagined future through his likewise imaginary witness, someone "of men born in the future", ὀψιγόνων ἀνθρώπων, who recognizes the tomb and the victim's killer as being Hector. In this future, Hector envisions the tomb in its perfect state, preserving in perpetuity its primary function and meaning: to act as a recognizable memorial of the past, and, in this particular case, to bestow glory upon Hector into the future that will "never perish", οὔ ποτ᾽ ὀλεῖται.[182] However, as we have just seen, it is a very likely possibility that tombs fail in their form and function, slipping into oblivion and leaving the memory of the dead to the realm of the immortals only.[183] While this particular moment may leave room for speculation and room in Hector's imagined future for this perfect future scenario, the *Iliad* presents us in Book 23 with another example of just how tombs can fail in their function and meaning in the face of heroes themselves—if they were even tombs to begin with.

[182] As Dr. Capettini pointed out to me, there is an interesting contrast between Hector's belief here in the preservation of the tomb in the future, and his words to Andromache at *Iliad* 6.447-448 that Troy will perish. This contrast and Hector's belief in the tomb's longevity may be due to the tomb's close connection with death and funerary rites, which Hector strongly adheres to as seen in 7.84-86 above, and in his words to Achilles at 22.254-259 where he promises to give back his opponent's corpse should he be successful.

[183] Garcia 2013 marks this particular moment as a model for what happens "when a supplementary oral tradition fails to function", referring to the fact that in Hector's imagined future, the tomb of his victim does not commemorate the dead man, but instead his killer; thus the *sēma* in Hector's speech will have "lost its referent". However, I find more interesting not necessarily the loss of referent (i.e., the dead man) in Hector's imagined future, but the potential loss of the knowledge of what the tomb commemorates entirely, including Hector's victory, as seen earlier with the tomb of Myrine.

During the funeral games for Patroclus, just as the participants are preparing for the chariot race, Nestor lends a word of advice to his son, Antilochus, advising him on where and when to drive his horse the hardest, pointing out to him the "turning-post" at the end of the makeshift racetrack:

σῆμα δέ τοι ἐρέω μάλ᾽ ἀριφραδές, οὐδέ σε λήσει.
ἕστηκε ξύλον αὖον ὅσον τ᾽ ὄργυι᾽ ὑπὲρ αἴης
ἢ δρυὸς ἢ πεύκης: τὸ μὲν οὐ καταπύθεται ὄμβρῳ,
λᾶε δὲ τοῦ ἑκάτερθεν ἐρηρέδαται δύο λευκὼ
ἐν ξυνοχῇσιν ὁδοῦ, λεῖος δ᾽ ἱππόδρομος ἀμφὶς
ἤ τευ σῆμα βροτοῖο πάλαι κατατεθνηῶτος,
ἢ τό γε νύσσα τέτυκτο ἐπὶ προτέρων ἀνθρώπων,
καὶ νῦν τέρματ᾽ ἔθηκε ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.

I will give you a very clear sign, you will not fail to notice it.
There is a dry piece of wood standing up from the ground about six feet,
Either of oak or pine; it has not completely rotted away by rain,
And two white stones are leaned against it on either side,
At the joining-place of the path, and there is a smooth driving about it;
Either it is a grave-mark of a mortal who died long ago,
Or was set up as a racing-goal by men who came before.
But now swift-footed godlike Achilles has set it as the turning-post.

Il. 23.326-33.

The description of the now turning-post is interesting for a number of reasons. First, Nestor's description of the dry piece of wood as "not completely rotted away by rain" suggests that it is in a functional state that has not been affected excessively by external forces as, in this

case, rain, and thus has not significantly deteriorated or been worn away. Second, Nestor notes that the standing piece of wood may be a grave-marker of someone in the past, *or* a racing-goal set up by men in the past. And third, and perhaps most interesting, is that Nestor *does not know* (and does not venture a guess) whether it is a tomb or a racing-goal.[184] As Garcia and Grethlein note, the uncertainty of the original referent of the turning-post is underscored by the fact that it is Nestor himself, "that great repository of ancient lore", that does not know what exactly the post is a sign for.[185] Furthermore, the fact that Nestor acknowledges that the piece of wood can be a sign for either a tomb or a racing-goal implies that he is familiar with both grave-markers and racing-goals being set up in a similar way to the one before him.

If we take a closer look at the language used here in connection with Hector's speech on an imaginary future witness of his victim's tomb, we see that the poem invites us to think more closely about the viability of Hector's imagined "perfect tomb". Hector places into his imaginary interlocutor's mouth the following when viewing his victim's perfect tomb:

> **ἀνδρὸς μὲν τόδε σῆμα πάλαι κατατεθνηῶτος**,
> ὅν ποτ᾽ ἀριστεύοντα κατέκτανε φαίδιμος Ἕκτωρ.
>
> "This is the tomb of a man who died long ago,
> Whom, once being the best, brilliant Hector killed."
>
> *Il*. 7.89-90.

[184] In fact, there is nothing to say that the original function of the rotted piece of wood is not something else, even a mere accident of nature! Its indeterminacy reinforced by Nestor's gap in knowledge further underscores the fragility of human objects of memorial.
[185] Garcia 2013: 150 above; Grethlein 2008, 31: "…not even Nestor, who is more or less the embodiment of memory, is able to decipher the sign for sure." So too Lynn-George 1988 and Dickson 1995 before them.

The language describing the dead man resembles closely that which Nestor uses above when speaking of the possibility of the piece of wood being a grave-marker:

> ἤ τευ **σῆμα βροτοῖο πάλαι κατατεθνηῶτος**…
> Either it is a grave-mark of a mortal who died long ago…
> *Il*. 23.331.

Taken together, the above passages in *Iliad* 2 and 23 shed light, and perhaps truth, on Hector's imagined perfect tomb in the future: Nestor cannot even confirm whether this σῆμα is a tomb or not, much less who it is meant to memorialize. The imagined future glory of Hector will not persist untarnished because the function and meaning of the tomb itself will not persist. Nestor also implies that the piece of wood that is not "rotted completely by rain" is fairly old, signaling as he does that it may be a grave-marker of someone who died "long ago", πάλαι**,** or was set up by "men before", προτέρων ἀνθρώπων. Thus, we see in the piece of wood, as in the tombs, not just a symbol of the past, but evidence and a witness of the *passage* of time. Just as the tomb of "far-bounding Myrine" is known to mortals now only as "Bramble hill", and just as the tomb of Aipytos threatens to become lost in translation over time by the ὄρος αἰπύ beside it, so too is Hector's imagined perfect tomb subject to the ravages of time, space, and the limits of human memory, bound to become an unidentifiable part of the landscape and subsumed by the natural world around it.

The tombs of the *Iliad* offer an insight into the passage of time, a way of viewing past, present, and future in relation to each other through the symbol and human artifact of the tomb in relation to and interaction with the natural world that surrounds it. These

examples show us the potential reality of all tombs on the Trojan plain, those that exist already and those that are still to come.[186] These include the tombs of Patroclus and even Hector himself:[187] while some tombs clearly do survive in the present narrative time of the *Iliad* as functional and meaningful memorials of the past, the poem suggests that they too are subject to these very same consequences of time, space, and human memory. Every tomb, each one a result of human creation, potentially turns to oblivion, subsumed by the earth, losing its identity as symbol of the human world.

Even if we look back to a tomb we have analyzed earlier in Chapter 2, the burial mound of Eëtion as described by his daughter Andromache in *Iliad* 6, we see that the natural world is from the beginning closely tied to the obscuring of the human. As Andromache describes to Hector the funeral of her father Eëtion, she describes how the Nymphs, daughters of Zeus, planted elm trees above the mortal king's burial mound:

> ἠδ᾽ ἐπὶ σῆμ᾽ ἔχεεν· περὶ δὲ πτελέας ἐφύτευσαν
> νύμφαι ὀρεστιάδες κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο. 420
>
> And piled a grave mound over it, and the nymphs of the mountains,
> Daughters of Zeus of the aegis, planted elm trees about it.
>
> *Il*. 6.416-20.

Even though this moment is placed into the past, before the narrative events of the poem, and is seen to be an idyllic moment where human-environment interaction is positive and

[186] Other tombs on the Trojan plain include the tomb of Aisytes (2.793) and Ilus (10.415)—Grethlein provides further bibliography on the list of tombs in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in 2008: 28.
[187] Grethlein 2008, 32: (on Patroclus' tomb) "If we transfer the obscurity of the past signification of the turning-post…to the tomb of Patroclus and project it into the future, it becomes questionable whether his tomb will ensure everlasting fame."

collaborative, even so this unifying moment perhaps still signals forward to the ultimate reality of the future of human memorials: to be encroached upon and subsumed by the natural world. The elm trees planted by the Nymphs of the mountains are from the beginning, from the very creation of the human tomb, entwined forever with the memorial of king Eëtion. They are from the beginning unified into one symbiotic space and place. The elm trees cover the king's tomb and, perhaps, just as the tomb of dancing Myrine is now recognized simply as "Bramble hill", the tomb will be lost to human knowledge and memory, eventually known only as "Elm hill".

In the present, humans imagine tombs existing in the future only and conspicuously as human artifacts denoting human existence and glory. However, as far as tombs go, we have seen an inevitable real future: oblivion and concealment through an aggressive natural world. The tomb of Eëtion is a perfect intersection of the human and natural worlds in that it acknowledges the ruthless inevitability of time and nature upon the human world and accepts, from the beginning, that the human is subject to the overwhelming force of the natural world. Gaia, the earth, slowly and gently conceals the evidence of human existence from human history and the world, covering over the tombs of mortals who have died long ago, subjecting their existence to a grassy hill upon the land. This gentle concealment by the earth is shown not only to be a consequence of the relation between time and the durability of human objects, but also begins to reveal the agency of aspects of the environment and their intentional encroachment upon the human. But as gradual and as slowly as the earth's encroachment upon the human is regarding tombs, so much more immediate and devastating is the force of water upon the human world.

Destroying the Wall that the Achaeans Built

Where the earth is seen to be a gentle concealer of the evidence of human existence over a long period of time, water can be thought of as just the opposite: a forceful destroyer of the human world in the immediate moment. And while the various tombs in the *Iliad* give us a glimpse into the passage of time and thus an example of what present-day tombs may experience and their function and meaning come up against in the future, Garcia's "not yet" future time, one man-made object in the poem is shown to be utterly and in no uncertain terms decimated in the future by the forces of the natural and divine worlds, namely, the makeshift wall that the Achaeans build to defend against the Trojan army. The destruction of the wall does not take place in the narrative present of Homer's *Iliad*, but is first promised by Zeus to Poseidon in Book 7, where Zeus states that the wall will tumble after the Achaeans have left the shores of Troy, and is then proleptically described as such in Book 12. The description places in full view the inevitable power of water as a destroyer of human creation, while ominously being bereft of human agents, thus envisioning an apocalyptic future where humans no longer exist.

Discussion and debate about the Achaean wall in the *Iliad* have been well documented from ancient sources to modern scholarship, from Thucydides and the scholia to Scodel, West, and many more. Topics of discussion range from the wall's historicity to its poetic quality, and to its functionality: whether the passage is an interpolation, why the wall comes so late in the Trojan war, how flimsy it appears as a defensive structure, etc. More recently, Porter presents a thorough account of the history of ancient criticism of the passage,

from Aristotle to Philostratus and Eustathius, in an effort to see how the wall as created (textual) object, can reveal the "tolerance in ancient and modern criticism for the limits of fictionality" in Homeric poetry.[188] Whether the wall is thought of as an interpolation, is a purely invented object (invented by the poet of "our" *Iliad* and not existing previously in the wider tradition), or fits logically within the narrative is of less significance for the purpose of this analysis. Rather, as with the concealment of human tombs in a future time by means of the earth, I am much more interested in how the wall is depicted as a *human* structure and how the poem describes its violent destruction in a future time by means of the force of water. However, before turning to the description of the destruction of the Achaean wall, it will be instructive first to analyze the close relationship between water and the destruction of the works of man.

The simile of the violent, destructive river is one of the few similes (like the tree similes) that appear also in the narrative action; that is, we see enacted in the narrative, as in the similes, rivers that are swollen, dangerous, and inflict destruction upon the human world and its characters. On the level of simile, often it is battle or a warrior in battle being compared to a swollen river, as in the following example.[189] As Diomedes rages through the battlefield in Book 5 of the *Iliad*, he is compared to a swollen river that destroys the "many lovely works of young men":

> θῦνε γὰρ ἂμ πεδίον ποταμῷ πλήθοντι ἐοικὼς
> χειμάρρῳ, ὅς τ᾽ ὦκα ῥέων ἐκέδασσε γεφύρας,
> τὸν δ᾽ οὔτ᾽ ἄρ τε γέφυραι ἐεργμέναι ἰσχανόωσιν,

[188] Porter 2011. Porter's account remains a thorough analysis of the history of debate around the Achaean wall from ancient to modern critics and should be consulted if further inquiry into the topic is desired.
[189] Fenno 2005 presents a thorough treatment of water imagery in the *Iliad*; for water imagery used in the "ebb and flow of battle", see 488-491.

οὔτ᾽ ἄρα ἔρκεα ἴσχει ἀλωάων ἐριθηλέων 90
ἐλθόντ᾽ ἐξαπίνης ὅτ᾽ ἐπιβρίσῃ Διὸς ὄμβρος,
πολλὰ δ᾽ ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ ἔργα κατήριπε κάλ᾽ αἰζηῶν.

For he went storming up the plain like a winter-swollen
River in spate that scatters the dikes in its running current,
One that the strong-compacted dikes can no longer contain,
Neither the mounded banks of the blossoming vineyards hold it
Rising suddenly as Zeus' rain makes heavy the water
And many lovely works of the young men crumble beneath it.
Il. 5.87-92.

There are two significant observations to keep in mind moving forward: first, the characteristic of the river as being unable to be contained, of overflowing its banks; and second, that the object of the river's destruction is defined as belonging to the human world. It is sensible that the river in the simile be characterized as uncontrollable seeing as it is being used as a comparison for Diomedes in battle, who, the narrator tells us, is fighting with such violence that it is not clear what side he is on.[190]

But to describe the object destroyed in the simile as the "many lovely works of young men" is particularly striking. On the one hand, the "works" themselves, the *erga*, are characterized as being "lovely", kala; on the other hand, the lovely works belong to and are, presumably, created by the "young men", the αἰζηῶν. The simile puts in opposition the

[190] Fenno 2005, 490 on this simile focuses on the "dams of war" motif that emerges in correlation to this and other water similes: "To summarize: the recurring phrase 'dams of war' – elaborated by a river simile and ultimately by the animation of a river god – contributes to the poem's hydropolemic imagery by suggesting that military embankments resemble a river's banks, just as warriors are analogous to rushing water." While Fenno does not comment on the *erga* that are destroyed in the simile, his analysis reinforces the unrestrained force and violence with which the *erga* are decimated.

beautiful work of man and the violent force of the natural world. In the beauty we see the care and culture of the human world, while the swollen river swiftly and callously wipes this away. Furthermore, the substantive αἰζηῶν characterizes the men as "young", "vigorous",[191] suggesting a healthy "livingness" to them and the promise of continuity, which is itself then imparted to their lovely creation as well. The violence and immediacy of the river's destruction is amplified by the description of the *erga* as lovely and thriving.

The image of rivers destroying the works of humans is shown again in the following simile. As Patroclus rages in the midst of battle, the noise of the stamping feet of the horses beneath their riders is compared to swollen rivers ripping apart hillsides as they rush toward the sea:

> τῶν δέ τε πάντες μὲν ποταμοὶ πλήθουσι ῥέοντες,
> πολλὰς δὲ κλιτῦς τότ᾽ ἀποτμήγουσι χαράδραι, 390
> ἐς δ᾽ ἅλα πορφυρέην μεγάλα στενάχουσι ῥέουσαι
> ἐξ ὀρέων ἐπικάρ, μινύθει δέ τε ἔργ᾽ ἀνθρώπων.
> ὣς ἵπποι Τρῳαὶ μεγάλα στενάχοντο θέουσαι.
>
> …and all the rivers of these men swell current to full spate
> And in the ravines of their water-courses rip all the hillsides
> And dash whirling in huge noise down to the blue sea, out of
> The mountains headlong, so that the works of men are diminished.
> So huge rose the noise from the horses of Troy in their running.
>
> *Il*. 16.389-93.

[191] Cunliffe 1977: 11.

The sheer force and violence of the rivers are once again put into full focus in the simile, swollen as they are, πλήθουσι, by a Zeus-sent rain, which again links sensibly to the object of the simile, this time the noise created on the battlefield by the stamping of the horses. However, perhaps more interesting again is how the violent rivers are said to "diminish the works of men", μινύθει δέ τε ἔργ᾽ *ἀνθρώπων*. Thus, the rivers are not just being used to describe the immense nature of their power, but are also being carefully placed in opposition to the work of men upon the land. While this time neither the *erga* nor the men are accompanied by a modifier as in the previous example, the action of the river upon the *erga* is equally destructive: as the rivers rush seaward they "diminish", μινύθει, the works of men. In the verb μινύθει, as opposed to the verb κατήριπε in the previous example, there is a sense of the object getting smaller, of becoming less than it originally was. The destruction of the *erga* of men in this example puts forth a vision of the crumbling of the human world as opposed to a clear devastation as before, though the outcome is the same: the works of humankind are utterly destroyed by the force of violent waters.

In these similes we see the immediate, violent destruction of the human world by means of swollen rivers. These figural descriptions prefigure and inform the destruction of the Achaean wall, an event that is narrated in a future time envisioned after the war, after the Achaeans have left the shores of Troy. Nestor is the first to propose the building of the wall. After the Achaeans and Trojans have agreed to a cease-fire following the duel between Hector and Ajax, Nestor proposes to the Achaeans that they build this wall upon the land—more specifically, built upon a heaped-up funeral mound meant for all of their gathered dead, "indiscriminately from the plain"—a wall that will protect them against the Trojan army (7.336-343). Once the Achaean kings agree to this plan, they then begin to build the wall just

100 lines later (7.435-441). Before moving on to the wall's destruction in a future time, however, we may pause to think about the nature of the wall that Nestor suggests, a wall that is built upon a mass grave, which itself is fused to the Trojan land.

As the foundation of the Achaean wall, Nestor suggests a singular mound packed atop the funeral pyre of Achaean dead, whose corpses have been recently retrieved from the battlefield during the cease-fire:

> τύμβον δ᾽ ἀμφὶ πυρὴν ἕνα χεύομεν ἐξαγαγόντες
> ἄκριτον ἐκ πεδίου. ποτὶ δ᾽ αὐτὸν δείμομεν ὦκα
> πύργους ὑψηλοὺς εἶλαρ νηῶν τε καὶ αὐτῶν.
>
> And let us gather and pile one single mound on the corpse-pyre
> Indiscriminately from the plain, and build fast upon it
> Towered ramparts, to be a defense of ourselves and our vessels.
>
> *Il*. 7.336-338.

In terms of the interaction and intersection between the human and natural worlds, Nestor's plan for the wall, which does get built the way he describes, is quite fascinating. We see a single funeral pyre covered over by a mounded tomb, τύμβον…χεύομεν (which we expect during a burial), a human construct whose function, we have seen, is to memorialize the dead, immediately covered over by the building of the make-shift wall in one single instant; thus, the unwanted potentiality of the unified tomb losing its original function and meaning in human terms becomes a reality: the wall, using the funeral mound as its foundation, obscures the tomb and erases its meaning. Furthermore, as Nestor states, the dirt and material

used for the tomb is ἄκριτον, indiscriminately chosen from the plain,[192] thus suggesting that the mound will be obscured not only by the wall, but also become intermingled with the earth of the plain. Thus, Nestor alters the function and meaning of the tomb in a way that the passage of time and the encroachment of the earth is seen to do with the other funeral mounds in the *Iliad* (i.e., by accelerating the concealment of the mound in the natural landscape), and places upon the tomb another human construct which itself covers over the earth and the pyre, thus creating a layered creation that is ultimately a testament to human in(ter)vention and ingenuity: the proper *erga* of men.

This man-made *thing*, neither a fully-fledged wall nor a natural barricade, a veritable Frankenstein's monster jutting out of the earth and created with ramparts atop the ashy remains of the dead, is doomed to fail from its beginning. Though ingenious, Nestor's wall will be henceforth destroyed, threatened to be destroyed, and further mocked for the ease of its destruction on numerous occasions. What Nestor describes in his plan for the wall is the more-than-human work that can only be attributed to the passage of time and the power of the natural world. In this sense, the wall is an act of hubris: Nestor and the Achaeans attempt to create something beyond that which is in their power, beyond the human. Thought of in this way, the full-scale decimation of the wall in the future, beyond the narrative events of the *Iliad*, through the violent, cosmic joining together of the rivers of Troy is a fitting response to the wall's very existence.

[192] The meaning of this phrase is disputed. Garcia 2013: 98 translates "without separation between mounds", referring to the individual burial mounds of each soldier; Porter 2011: 8 notes that the meaning of akriton "was and remains uncertain", noting two different translations: "'Undiscriminated' in relation to the material (i.e., arbitrarily chosen earth), or 'in relation to [the] individual corpses' contained in the burial mound (i.e., a polyandrion)? The second phrase is from Kirk 1990 on 7.336-37." I translate in Porter's first sense, where "indiscriminate" is taken as referring to the material used to heap up the unified tomb.

After the Achaeans begin to build their wall upon the Trojan plain, Poseidon complains to Zeus that the Achaeans have not given sacrifices to the gods before they began their great endeavor. However, more to the real point of contention, Poseidon goes on to express his fears that the newly made wall will win the Achaeans fame that will "last as long as the dawn-light is scattered" (*Il*. 7.451) and will thereupon cause humans to forget that Poseidon and Apollo built the walls of Troy. In Poseidon's estimation, the fame of the man-made wall will replace the memory and fame of the wall built by the gods. In a sense, Poseidon is right to fear this potential future: as we have seen, as time marches forward the failures of human knowledge and memory have been shown as certainties when thinking about other human artifacts as the various tombs described in the poem.[193] Even so, Zeus reassures Poseidon that this will not be the case, that his fame will last as long as the dawn shines, and that Poseidon himself should break the Achaean wall down to bits:

ἄγρει μὰν ὅτ᾽ ἂν αὖτε κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοὶ
οἴχωνται σὺν νηυσὶ φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν
τεῖχος ἀναρρήξας τὸ μὲν εἰς ἅλα πᾶν καταχεῦαι,
αὖτις δ᾽ ἠϊόνα μεγάλην ψαμάθοισι καλύψαι,
ὥς κέν τοι μέγα τεῖχος ἀμαλδύνηται Ἀχαιῶν.

Come then! After once more the flowing-haired Achaeans
Are gone back with their ships to the beloved land of their fathers,
Break their wall to pieces and scatter it into the salt sea
And pile again the beach deep under the sands and cover it;
So let the great wall of the Achaeans go down to destruction.

[193] Garcia 2013: 110 says that with the Achaean wall's destruction so too is the *kleos* of the Achaeans destroyed, thus confirming Poseidon's fear should the makeshift wall remain standing; Porter 2011 similarly argues that by Poseidon's very insistence that the Achaean wall is a threat to his divine glory, the god has unwittingly made certain that the wall *will* receive glory hereafter.

Il. 7.459-63.

Zeus here puts forth a potential future where, after the war is finished and the Achaeans have returned home, Poseidon is allowed to destroy the makeshift wall to pieces, to "scatter it into the salt sea", and to bury any vestige of its existence in the sands of the ocean. That is, Zeus responds to Poseidon's fear that the Achaean wall will garner eternal fame capable of eclipsing Poseidon's own by describing the utter destruction and erasure of the human wall by means of the natural force of water and earth. This distorted "burial" of sorts[194] within water and earth is threatened elsewhere in the poem, in fact, by the river-god Scamander to Achilles after the son of Peleus and Thetis does not cease killing Trojan warriors and clogging up the river-god's flowing waters. Scamander implores his brother Simoeis to help him defeat Achilles and bury him in a watery grave:

> φημὶ γὰρ οὔτε βίην χραισμησέμεν οὔτέ τι εἶδος
> οὔτε τὰ τεύχεα καλά, τά που μάλα νειόθι λίμνης
> κείσεθ᾽ ὑπ᾽ ἰλύος κεκαλυμμένα· κὰδ δέ μιν αὐτὸν
> εἰλύσω ψαμάθοισιν ἅλις χέραδος περιχεύας
> μυρίον, οὐδέ οἱ ὀστέ᾽ ἐπιστήσονται Ἀχαιοὶ 320
> ἀλλέξαι· τόσσην οἱ ἄσιν καθύπερθε καλύψω.
> αὐτοῦ οἱ καὶ σῆμα τετεύξεται, οὐδέ τί μιν χρεὼ
> ἔσται τυμβοχόης, ὅτε μιν θάπτωσιν Ἀχαιοί.
>
> For I say that his strength will not be enough for him nor his beauty
> Nor his arms in their splendor, which somewhere deep down under the waters
> Shall lie folded under the mud; and I will whelm his own body

[194] Zeus uses the verb καταχεῦαι, a compound of χέω, meaning "to pour", "to shed, spread", "to pile, heap up", among other definitions, used by Nestor above in the gathering of the funeral mound for the unified pyre (τύμβον…χεύομεν).

> Deep, and pile it over with abundance of sands and rubble
> Numberless, nor shall the Achaeans know where to look for
> His bones to gather them, such ruin will I pile over him.
> And there shall his monument be made, and he will have no need
> Of any funeral mound to be buried in by the Achaeans.
>
> *Il*. 21. 316-323.

Just as Zeus describes the broken Achaean wall being piled over by the sands of the beach within the ocean waters, so too does the river-god Scamander threaten to bury Achilles and his armaments somewhere "deep down under the waters", within the mud, his body piled over "with an abundance of sands and rubble", this becoming the σῆμα of Achilles, with no need for a funeral mound, a τυμβοχόης. The river-god envisions the burial of Achilles in water and earth, a burial that will both literally and figuratively conceal Achilles, subsuming him within the watery earth where he will be lost to the human world, where the Achaeans will not know "where to look for his bones". This encroachment upon the human tomb resembles the fate of tombs in the *Iliad* that we have discussed earlier,[195] human memorials that eventually fail in their primary function of memorialization through the wears of time and space.[196] What Scamander threatens here is to collapse into one single and immediate moment the passage of time, to make the site of Achilles' burial, from the beginning, covered over with earth and water, thus "fast-tracking", as it were, the process of the erasure of the human. Of course, Scamander will not succeed in burying Achilles within his waters, but the

[195] Although in Scamander's fantasy there is no *human tomb* as such, it is only through the description of his desire that we come to this point, which, as a riverine divinity and environmental force, chimes with the argument that forces of earth and water conceal and destroy traces of the human world.
[196] Scodel 1982, Porter 2011, and Garcia 2013 all connect the threat of Scamander to the eventual destruction of the makeshift Achaean wall/burial mound. Where I turn my attention is to the agents of this destruction and erasure of the human: earth and water, and thus to the relationship between the natural world and humans in the future.

Achaean wall, on the other hand, *will* be destroyed and cast into a watery grave, its memory and fame buried underneath the sands of the sea.

Whereas in the previous examples that we have discussed in this chapter the forceful destruction that rivers inflict upon the human world has only been described in similes and spoken of as promises of the future or via threats, in the description of the destruction of the Achaean wall we see enacted in the future time of the *Iliad* this very action. The violent power inherent in the rivers of the natural world finds fulfilment in a future after the events of the Trojan war, after the Trojan people have perished and the Achaean army has left the shores of Troy. Just as Zeus had promised to Poseidon earlier to "let the great wall of the Achaeans go down to destruction" in this appointed future time,[197] so this future time is envisioned just as the Trojans are desperate to breech the Achaean wall in the present. Thus, the narrator tells us that the wall, "built in spite of the immortal gods…was not to stand firm for a long time",[198] and describes the cosmic nature of its destruction in the future "when in the tenth year the city of Priam was taken" and the Achaeans had returned home:[199]

> δὴ τότε μητιόωντο Ποσειδάων καὶ Ἀπόλλων
> τεῖχος ἀμαλδῦναι ποταμῶν μένος εἰσαγαγόντες.
> ὅσσοι ἀπ᾽ Ἰδαίων ὀρέων ἅλα δὲ προρέουσι,
> Ῥῆσός θ᾽ Ἑπτάπορός τε Κάρησός τε Ῥοδίος τε
> Γρήνικός τε καὶ Αἴσηπος δῖός τε Σκάμανδρος
> καὶ Σιμόεις, ὅθι πολλὰ βοάγρια καὶ τρυφάλειαι
> κάππεσον ἐν κονίῃσι καὶ ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν.

[197] *Iliad* 7.463.
[198] *Iliad* 12.8-9.
[199] *Iliad* 12.15-16.

τῶν πάντων ὁμόσε στόματ᾽ ἔτραπε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,
ἐννῆμαρ δ᾽ ἐς τεῖχος ἴει ῥόον: ὗε δ᾽ ἄρα Ζεὺς
συνεχές, ὄφρά κε θᾶσσον ἁλίπλοα τείχεα θείη.
αὐτὸς δ᾽ ἐννοσίγαιος ἔχων χείρεσσι τρίαιναν
ἡγεῖτ᾽, ἐκ δ᾽ ἄρα πάντα θεμείλια κύμασι πέμπε
φιτρῶν καὶ λάων, τὰ θέσαν μογέοντες Ἀχαιοί,
λεῖα δ᾽ ἐποίησεν παρ᾽ ἀγάρροον Ἑλλήσποντον,
αὖτις δ᾽ ἠϊόνα μεγάλην ψαμάθοισι κάλυψε
τεῖχος ἀμαλδύνας. ποταμοὺς δ᾽ ἔτρεψε νέεσθαι
κὰρ ῥόον, ᾗ περ πρόσθεν ἴεν καλλίρροον ὕδωρ.

…then at last Poseidon and Apollo took counsel
To wreck the wall, letting loose the strength of rivers upon it,
All the rivers that run to the sea from the mountains of Ida,
Rhesus and Heptaporus, Karesus and Rhodius,
Grenikus and Aisepus, and immortal Scamander,
And Simoeis, where much ox-hide armor and helmets were tumbled
In the river mud, and many of the race of half-god mortals.
Phoibus Apollo turned the mouths of these waters together
And nine days long threw the flood against the wall, and Zeus rained
Incessantly, to break the wall faster and wash it seaward.
And the shaker of the earth himself holding in his hands the trident
Guided them, and hurled into the waves all the bastions' strengthening
Of logs and stones the toiling Achaeans had set in position
And made all smooth again by the hard running passage of Helle
And once again piled the great beach under sand, having wrecked
The wall, and turned the rivers again to make their way down
The same channel where before they had run the bright stream of their water.

Il. 12.17-33.

The description is striking in how closely it resembles the violence of rivers in the previous simile, in particular the rivers swollen by the rain of Zeus and the object of its destruction being the work of men. However, most significant for the purpose of this study is the interaction between the human and natural worlds in relation to time: just as we have considered the human-environment relationship in previous chapters focused on events which occur in the past and present time, so too now is it important to think about this relationship as it occurs in the future. Three points of interest emerge from this passage as significant for thinking about this relationship: first, the immensity of the force used to destroy the wall; second, the destruction of a human-made object; and third, what appears to be a return to an original state of being that is *without* human involvement.

Porter remarks that involved in the passage of the wall is something "far more intriguing" than its potential interpretation as a "solid and spectacular monument", and that is its "monumental obliteration". It is this "darker side" of Homer's invention, Porter continues, that gives the Achaean wall its "haunting quality".[200] While Porter is referring to the quality of Homer as creator and destroyer of objects within the *Iliad*, I argue that this haunting quality attaches itself to the future time in which the Achaean wall is described as being destroyed, an apocalyptic future of sorts that is without humankind, without human presence, and without any vestige of human history. How far into the future can/will this vision without the human stretch forward? The passage does not provide a limit or a time-after-which humans appear again, and thus, has the potential to stretch *indefinitely* into the future, a time where humans no longer burden the earth, covered over and relegated to oblivion by the

[200] Porter 2011: 12.

force of earth and water, arriving at a post-war and post-human world. The threat of human extermination that Gaia poses when she groans under the weight of the Achaeans assembled upon her in Book 2 of the *Iliad*, summoning the aid of Zeus, is realized in this future through the violence and force of the gathered rivers of Troy. Let us return now to the wall's monumental destruction by means of the force of water and earth, the agents and harbingers of this haunting future.

The catalogue of the rivers of Troy underscores the all-involving geographical project that is taking place in the destruction of the Achaean wall, as many rivers as "run to the sea from the mountains of Ida". Not only does the catalogue reinforce the strong connection between the rivers of the natural world and the land of Troy (e.g., as seen in the Trojan youths named after the rivers),[201] especially given the context of this future time "when all the bravest among the Trojans had died in the fighting",[202] but the naming of each of the nine rivers in succession, some of which are not otherwise named during the events of the *Iliad*, creates a sense of cosmic significance in this future action. That is, just as the numerous catalogues in Hesiod's *Theogony* give a sense of the expansive and detailed nature of the universe and its various deities, and just as the catalogue of ships in *Iliad* 2 gives a sense of the all-encompassing nature of the Trojan war, so too does this catalogue of the rivers of Troy frame the destruction of the Achaean wall as of critical significance on a cosmic scale.[203] Thus, not only are we seeing the erasure of an Achaean monument and of the

[201] Fenno 2005: 482-487.
[202] *Iliad* 12.13.
[203] Scodel 1982 argues that the Achaean wall is linked to the myth of destruction by the description of heroes as 'hemitheoi' and by the presence of flooding. The myth of destruction also marks the end of the race of heroes, the separation of humans from gods, the lightening of the human burden upon Gaia, and the punishment of human impiety. As such, this further serves to underscore the sheer significance of the destruction of the Achaean wall; as Scodel notes on 45: the wall stands for something "…beyond itself: the achievements of its builders".

evidence of war at Troy,[204] but we are also witnessing the gathering of ancient, environmental forces which bring an end to an era of human time, ushering in a future that is as yet unwritten in Iliadic time and space. Where before Gaia's groans activated a link to cosmic war and destruction at the beginning of the *Iliad*, here the rivers of Troy bring this cosmic narrative—a reenactment of cosmic *trauma* drama—to a spectacular close. The nine rivers swollen and strengthened by the rain of Zeus, who makes it rain "incessantly", συνεχές, while Apollo turns the rivers upon the wall "for nine days", ἐννῆμαρ, further underscore the enormity of the force of the rivers that here oppose and decimate the Achaean wall, a very human structure.

We have analyzed the nature of the Achaean wall in terms of how it was built under Nestor's direction in *Iliad* 7, built upon the shared funeral pyre of the recent dead and jutting out of the Trojan earth. We have also discussed the ways in which this very *un*natural, makeshift wall can be seen as an act of hubris not only in the manner in which it was cobbled together, but also because of human negligence of the gods: as the narrator tells us at the beginning of the description of the wall's destruction, the wall was built "in despite of the immortal gods".[205] The passage puts into focus again the man-made nature of the wall, the fact that it is a very *human* object, when it describes the wall being torn to pieces, its logs and stones falling apart, all of which "the toiling Achaeans had set in position", τὰ θέσαν μογέοντες Ἀχαιοί. Much like the similes describe swollen rivers destroying the *erga* of men (e.g., the kala *erga* of young men in one instance), here we see this very action enacted in the future: the *wall-as-ergon* is said to be set up by "toiling Achaeans", while the modifier

[204] Grethlein 2008, 34: "…the Achaeans' wall documents the Trojan war."
[205] *Iliad* 12.8.

μογέοντες further characterizes the Achaeans as creators of the object, their effort and energy bound with their creation which is inevitably destroyed.[206] The Achaean wall is seen not only to represent the human world, but is in fact the only remnant of a human presence in this future, a remnant which the natural world erases from existence.[207]

Finally, after the wall is torn to pieces, destroyed, and buried beneath the sands of the sea, the passage describes a return, of sorts, to what appears to be the way things *used* or *ought* to be: perhaps a return to a time *before* the Achaeans came, or perhaps a movement towards how things are to be from now on, in the *future*. With the wall gone, the narrator describes how the beach is piled over with sand "once again", αὖτις, and the rivers are made to turn upon "the same channel where before they had run", ᾗ περ πρόσθεν ἴεν. But however much the language in the passage suggests a *return* to how things used to be, the fact is that the world has changed dramatically and forever: the Trojan world and its people have been annihilated and the Achaeans have themselves either died or sailed back home. "Troy" is no longer. While the beach may return to its pristine sandiness, no human-made object in sight, and the rivers set upon the courses in which they used to flow, the world described in this post-war future is one *without humans*. It is not a return to the past which is described, a past where the natural world is untouched by human hands, but rather a future where the natural world has moved on from the human, has disentangled itself from human influence and

[206] For Bassi 2005, the ruined wall of the Achaeans is "a sign of the Greeks' victory", in a historical sense, rather than the defeat that seems imminent in the present, noting how for Thucydides the ruined walls of Mycenae show their former power. In this sense, the close affinity of the wall to the "toiling Achaeans", μογέοντες Ἀχαιοί, can be seen as imparting this semblance of victory further; however, it can also be said that the passage undercuts this hard work through the cosmic unraveling of the wall and the Trojan war, as argued above.

[207] Porter 2011, 32: "Both Troy and the Achaean wall suffered terrible destructions, and what is more, they stood *as a material correlative of human destruction*" (emphasis my own); Garcia 2013, 99: the wall is "specifically represented as a mortal artifact".

reclaimed its space in the world. As the wall is destroyed and covered over, so too is the human footprint, so too is the knowledge and history of men, buried and subsumed by earth and water. Just as Porter describes the Achaean wall as a "virtual image of Troy" in how it is destroyed in the poem without ever being destroyed in the narrative proper, glimpsing into a future end "without consummating that end" from within the poem,[208] thus do we see in the Achaean wall's destruction the full-scale erasure of the human from the Trojan land.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the nature of the interaction between the human and natural worlds as depicted in the future of the *Iliad*, a future that is envisioned as being a time beyond the scope of the narrative events of the poem, and moving into a time after the Trojan war has ended. Whereas the relationship between humans and the natural world in the past has been shown to reflect an idyllic mode of coexistence and interconnection, and the present has been characterized by the mass destruction of the environment by human agents, the future suggests a relationship between humans and the natural world that is defined by *separation*, a violent separation that is intentionally and irrevocably imposed by the natural world through the destruction and erasure of the human world. The agency of the natural world which imposes itself upon the human in the future can also be seen as a reaction to the present, wherein humans destroy the environment, and thus this violent separation can also

[208] Porter 2011: 22.

be defined as being self-imposed, a consequence of the excess of human violence and warfare.

By viewing the various tombs in the *Iliad*, the σήματα described on the Trojan plain, as well as the proleptic destruction of the makeshift wall that the Achaeans build, the manner in which the natural world destroys and covers over evidence of the human world is also revealed: through earth, water, and the passage of time. While the tomb itself is not always described in a future time, the symbol and physical artifact of the tomb through time and space do reflect the passage of time, and thus, what can potentially happen to any and every tomb that we encounter or that is envisioned by characters in the narrative. As the tomb of "far-bounding Myrine" reveals, the meaning and function of a tomb can fail over time in human terms, slowly covered over by the earth, and become known in the present to the world of men only as "Bramble hill". Similarly, the tomb of the hero Aipytos placed next to a steep hill, an ὄρος αἰπύ, presents the possibility that over time the difference between the hero's name and the quality of the hill as "steep", αἰπύ, may be lost in translation, and thus become intertwined, the one lost in place of the other. Thus, the passage of time and the slow but gradual encroachment of the earth upon these human monuments threaten to cast human evidence, knowledge, and history into oblivion, covered over and subsumed beneath the folds of Gaia herself.

While tombs are shown to be slowly concealed by the earth over time, the works of men and the wall of the Achaeans are concealed in a decidedly opposite manner: through the violent and immediate destruction of rivers and water. The similes depict rivers swollen with the rain of Zeus destroying the *erga* of men, an action which is then enacted in the description of the proleptic destruction of the Achaean wall, a makeshift object built upon the

ashes of the dead, strategically planned to be fused to the Trojan plain. The wall's destruction is described in great detail and suggests the cosmic scale of this event in the future, after the Trojan people have perished and the Achaeans have left the shores of Troy. The complete destruction of the wall and the immediate erasure and concealment of any trace or evidence of its existence upon the land through the rivers of Troy and the sands of the sea reflect not only the fall of an Achaean monument, or even an action on behalf of the land to avenge the death of the Trojan people, but the removal of the *human* from the earth. The wall becomes the final symbol of the human world in this future time, a time that moves beyond the human and envisions the natural world restore itself and reclaim what has been taken and destroyed. The *Iliad* invites us to think about the future as a world that persists without the human, a world that has reacted to and retaliated against the excesses of human violence and ambition—perhaps a more than timely omen for our own day an age.

Conclusion

In Book 6 of the *Iliad*, Hector returns to the Trojan citadel in order to bring Paris back to the front lines, but he also stops to spend some time with his wife Andromache and their young child, Astyanax, on the walls of Troy. In Chapters 2 and 3, we analyzed this scene as one that associates Astyanax—called Scamandrius by his father—closely to the Trojan natural world and also foreshadows his and Troy's ultimate doom through the connection with the river-god Scamander who is boiled in fire in *Iliad* 21. However, the introduction of Astyanax in this scene also has embedded in it a direct link to the *cosmic* as we have argued in the course of the thesis. As the young boy's attendant carries him to his mother and father, he is described as a "little child", as "only a baby",[209] and furthermore:

> Ἑκτορίδην ἀγαπητὸν **ἀλίγκιον ἀστέρι καλῷ**,
> τόν ῥ᾽ Ἕκτωρ καλέεσκε Σκαμάνδριον, αὐτὰρ οἱ ἄλλοι
> Ἀστυάνακτ᾽· οἷος γὰρ ἐρύετο Ἴλιον Ἕκτωρ.
>
> Hector's son, the admired, **like a beautiful star**,
> Whom Hector called Scamandrius, but all of the others
> Astyanax—lord of the city; since alone Hector saved Ilion.
>
> *Il*. 6.401-403.

Not only is young Scamandrius a symbol of Troy's intimate connection to its environment, nor an image of the death of the future of the Trojan people, but in his likeness to a "beautiful star",[210] ἀλίγκιον ἀστέρι καλῷ, the son of Hector and Andromache reminds us of the cosmic

[209] *Il*. 6.400.
[210] Moulton 1977: 24-26 sees this as an ominous sign of foreboding linked to other star similes.

implications of the events of the *Iliad*. The events that play out in the Homeric poem are set against a cosmic backdrop evoked here by the link to the cosmos, to a time and space that is both within and without the present narrative. The title of the thesis, "The Boy whom Hector called Scamandrius", thus refers not just to the important figure that is Hector and Andromache's son, but also to the position that the people of Troy and the Trojan war have within cosmic and mythological history, marked by the natural world's close connection to cosmic time.

In the course of the thesis, I have argued that the events narrated in the *Iliad* resonate closely with significant episodes that are described in the wider epic tradition, in particular in Hesiod's *Theogony* and the Cyclic *Cypria*. This resonance is evoked by the figure of Gaia in *Iliad* 2, whose groans beneath the feet of the gathered Achaeans mark the guttural beginnings of the cosmic orchestra that overlays the Homeric poem. Through the recurring language used of Gaia's groans, *stenachizo* and the prefix *upo-* or *epi-*, the recurring imagery of rivers, trees, and mountainsides being set on fire and destroyed, and through the simile of Typhoeus in *Iliad* 2.780-85, the figure of Gaia and the depiction of the destruction of the natural world in the Homeric poem not only evoke scenes of cosmic significance in the wider epic tradition like the Titanomachy, the defeat of Typhoeus, and the origin of the Trojan war as a way to ease the burden of humankind upon the earth, but they also mark the events of the *Iliad* as of equal significance as these. While scholars have noticed this connection,[211] there are three ways in which my analysis departs from earlier research: (1) by following the figure of Gaia throughout the *Iliad* and analyzing further the ways in which she interacts with the narrative

[211] E.g., Kirk 1984; Schein 1984: 50-1; Pucci 2009.

and its characters, demonstrating an agency that has not been analyzed in detail before, (2) by focusing on the importance of the depiction of the destruction of the natural world in these episodes of cosmic significance, and (3) by suggesting that the poet of the *Iliad* redeploys the imagery of environmental destruction in order to characterize violence, warfare, and the natures of the Trojans and the Achaeans. We can thus trace the imagery of environmental devastation in the poem and see encoded in these images not only a link to cosmic myth and time—and see, as a result, the events of the poem and its characters positioned *within* cosmic and mythological history—but also how Homer repurposes these images to further nuance the poem and its characters.

Scholars have long analyzed the ways in which imagery that depicts the natural world in the Homeric similes affects the characterization of its human counterpart. For example, Lonsdale's 1990 book, *Creatures of speech: Lion, Herding, and Hunting Similes in the* Iliad, presents a thorough analysis of the image of the lion in the Homeric poem in its immediate and wider context, and develops the ways in which the lion is anthropomorphized, and its human counterpart is bestialized (this can be seen in language and action). More to the elements of nature discussed in my thesis, if we think back to the scholarship on the tree similes discussed in Chapter 3, we can see the various ways that this simile family has been analyzed: as nature that is useful to man, how trees become cultural objects, how the image of the felled tree creates greater sympathy for the fallen hero, and likewise marks the hero's killer as a superior warrior, etc.[212] As we discussed in the Introduction, detailed close readings of passages that depict images of the natural world and their relation to the human

[212] See discussion in Chapter 3.

have likewise featured in the scholarship of Nagy, Griffin, Schein, Lynn-George, and Alden (among others),[213] as well as in scholarship that is explicitly concerned with the natural world in Homer.[214] In this sense, my observation that the imagery of the destruction of the natural world characterizes the Trojans and the Achaeans is not new. However, where I depart from existing scholarship is that I argue that this characterization of Trojans and Achaeans in the *Iliad* is informed by a cosmic framework signaled by resonance with the wider epic tradition, and, moreover, that the depiction of the human-environment relationship in the poem is a *changing* one in relation to time.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 argue that the nature of the human-environment relationship in the *Iliad* changes depending on whether the relationship is depicted in the past (Ch. 2), the present (Ch. 3), or the future (Ch. 4). The connection of the natural world to time is informed by the environment's link to events in cosmic history, as analyzed in Chapter 1, through the figure of Gaia. Thus, the engagement between human and environment in the poem is changing and dynamic, not static. Where existing scholarship like that of Redfield presents various ways of viewing the natural world and its relation to the human (e.g., as useful, dangerous, mysterious),[215] I present an analysis that focuses on a continuity of interaction and engagement between human and environment that changes over time and provides a reflection upon the actions of the present narrative. The poem depicts the human-environment relationship as one that is harmonious and fluid in the past, seen in the close connection between the human, divine, and non-human communities. The present is marked by human destruction of the environment, seen especially in the tree similes and the burning

[213] See Introduction p. 8-9.
[214] See Introduction p. 10-14.
[215] Redfield 1975: 186-199.

of the river-god Scamander. Finally, the future is characterized by the natural world's destruction of the human world through the degradation and concealment of human tombs, and the erasure of the Achaean wall. By envisioning a future where the earth and the rivers of Troy erase and subsume the traces of the human, a future that is placed next to its corresponding human-environment depiction in the present and the past, Homer suggests that human action in the present directly impacts a human future, and that destruction of the environment begets destruction of humankind itself.

I therefore place the work of this thesis as building upon the words of Holmes, namely that the landscape of the *Iliad* is a space "traversed by naturalcultural forces whose differences do not map easily onto our usual categories and *whose dimensions come most sharply into focus not in isolation but in encounter and in the relation*."[216] I have argued that the agency of the natural world—of Gaia, of the earth, the trees, and of the rivers of Troy—is most clearly observed through their engagement with the human, wherein the categories of nature and culture become blurred, and where gods, humans, and elements of the environment intermingle and intersect. I present here a novel and extended analysis of the depiction of the human-environment relationship in the *Iliad* which can be traced from the cosmic past, to the present, and into the future. Not only is the human-environment relationship—and the depiction of the natural world itself—central to the *Iliad*'s self-positioning within the wider epic tradition and the history of the cosmos, but through my analysis we can also observe that Homer is deeply attuned to the changes in this relationship

[216] Holmes 2015: 33 (emphasis my own).

through the passage of time, and that s/he is deeply attuned as well to the consequences and ramifications of human action in the present as reflected in the poem's narrative.

Further lines of inquiry may be pursued through the analysis presented in this thesis, three of which I will sketch out in brief below. The first has to do with thinking about the depiction of the human-environment relationship and its connection to temporality beyond the *Iliad* and into Homer's corresponding epic poem, the *Odyssey*. The *Odyssey* is a poem that has much to do with the passage of time, seeing as one of its major plots—the homecoming of Odysseus—depends upon the hero's twenty-year absence from Ithaca. And while the ten-year journey which Odysseus embarks upon is filled with numerous encounters with the non-human[217] (and analysis of these encounters in relation to time may themselves prove fruitful), one interesting aspect of the relation between time, humans, and the environment is in one of the *Odyssey*'s visions of the future in Book 11. In my analysis in Chapter 4 of the human-environment relation in connection to the future in the *Iliad*, I argued that the future that is envisioned in the poem is one that is *post-war* and *post-human*, depicting the erasure and non-presence of human beings. I also ask questions about the uncertain timeframe involved in this future: how far into the future does this vision stretch forward, and is there a time-after-which humans appear again?

In the Odyssean episode in Book 11, the prophet Teiresias tells Odysseus what he must do to complete his journey, the obstacles he will face, and how he will die (*Odyssey* 11.100-137). Teiresias says of one of Odysseus' future tasks:

ἔρχεσθαι δὴ ἔπειτα λαβὼν εὐῆρες ἐρετμόν,

[217] An excellent array of scholarship on this topic includes Schein (ed.) 1996; Dougherty 2001; Shay 2002; Buchan 2004; Christensen 2020; Hopman 2020.

εἰς ὅ κε τοὺς ἀφίκηαι οἳ οὐκ ἴσασι θάλασσαν
ἀνέρες, οὐδέ θ᾽ ἅλεσσι μεμιγμένον εἶδαρ ἔδουσιν·
οὐδ᾽ ἄρα τοί γ᾽ ἴσασι νέας φοινικοπαρήους
οὐδ᾽ ἐυήρε᾽ ἐρετμά, τά τε πτερὰ νηυσὶ πέλονται.[218] 125

Then you must take up your well-shaped oar and go on a journey
Until you come where there are men living who know nothing
Of the sea, and who eat food that is not mixed with salt, who never
Have known ships whose cheeks are painted purple, who never
Have known well-shaped oars, which act for ships as wings do.[219]

Od. 11.121-125.

The future that is described in Teiresias' vision is difficult to parse, especially in terms of *where* Odysseus must go. However, it is also a future that is marked by the depiction of humans interacting with their environment—or rather, *not* interacting with it. Odysseus must encounter men "who know nothing of the sea", οἳ οὐκ ἴσασι θάλασσαν. What kinds of ἀνέρες are these who do not know of the sea, who do not engage with their natural environment, and why not? The passage lends itself to an analysis like the one undertaken in this thesis: the scene is marked by a representation of humans engaging their environment in a future that is beyond the scope of the narrative events of the *Odyssey*, a future that is ambiguous and uncanny in its depiction of humans that are separated from the sea. As the two Homeric poems are often discussed in correspondence to one another, some questions that arise from viewing the passage in this way can include: does the *Odyssey* depict the human-environment relationship in a way that is similar to the one depicted in the *Iliad*? Does the *Odyssey* nuance

[218] Greek from the *Odyssey* is taken from Allen 1962.
[219] English translation of the *Odyssey* is taken from Lattimore 1965, with modification.

and respond to this depiction? And does human interaction with the environment in the present affect the nature of this relationship in the future?

A second opportunity for further research would involve exploring ancient audience and ancient reader responses to depictions of human-environment interactions examined in the thesis. Recently, Brockliss has written about the ancient Greek natural environment and Homeric imagery,[220] analyzing the ways in which the Homeric poems drew from their environment in order to help their audiences grasp abstract concepts in the poems like death and deception. Through my analysis, and with the aid of the ancient scholia and other ancient readers of Homer, we could ask whether ancient audiences would have been perceptive to the depictions of human-environment interaction in the poem, to trees, and whether historical, climatic disasters might have influenced reader responses to this aspect of the *Iliad*.[221] As we have seen, ancient readers like Eustathius comment on the destruction of trees in the similes of the *Iliad*, where they are compared to dying or dead warriors, saying in one case that the comparison is "emotional, and the poet speaks as though he sympathized with the tree."[222] Along this line of observation, we may consider further the cultural and historical valence of trees in ancient Greece—like the oak tree at the shrine of Zeus in Dodona—and we may ask whether ancient audiences and readers of Homer had an awareness of types of human impact on the environment, and whether the kinds of depictions of nature destroyed described in the *Iliad*—as examined in my analysis—would have resonated with them beyond the confines of the poem.

[220] Brockliss 2019.
[221] For example, as Walter 2017 examines regarding earthquakes in the ancient city of Helike.
[222] Eustathius (926.54) of the tree simile in *Iliad* 13.177-82.

The third line of inquiry has to do with perspectives drawn from an ecocritical point of view. In Chapter 1 I argued that the figure of Gaia, her groans, and the subsequent destruction of the natural world act as a signal for the wider epic tradition and evoke a cosmic backdrop of significant episodes in myth and time that feature the destruction and conflagration of the environment. I argued as well that the narrative of cosmic destruction seen in the wider epic tradition collapses upon the present Iliadic narrative and is felt throughout the extent of the poem. As such, the cosmic narrative of destruction can be seen as a *trauma*, both as wound and as a devastating experience in the past, that is felt by the earth, Gaia, and is triggered by images that relate to this wound.[223] If we were to pursue a closer analysis of the figure of Gaia in the *Iliad*, both as a figure that is anthropomorphized—as a female entity who groans,[224] is defiled by the dragging corpse of Hector,[225] etc.—and as the physical representation of the earth, we may speak of the wound she reexperiences in the Homeric poem not only as a *cosmic* trauma that is replayed again upon her landscape, but as *geo*trauma[226], the scars upon the earth's geological record, that is relived and reenacted in the present, a cosmic wound that is evident in the lines of poetry and the history of the cosmos. Not only would such an analysis evoke a greater agency and subjectivity for the figure of Gaia in the *Iliad*, the devastation and pain inflicted upon the earth felt on a much more visceral register, but further ecocritical questions could be asked as well. In Chapter 4, I argued that in its visions of the future the *Iliad* shows the consequences of human destruction

[223] Pucci 2009, 67: Pucci says of Gaia in the *Theogony*'s depiction of the defeat of Typhoeus, that "only Gaia remains a victim of violence."
[224] An analysis of the connection between women's lament in epic, στενάχω, and the groans of Gaia, στεναχίζω, may be especially fruitful.
[225] *Il*. 24.54: [Apollo speaks to the gods of Achilles' behavior] "For see, he does dishonor to the dumb earth in his fury."
[226] Matts and Tynan 2012; Cole, Dolphijn, Bradley 2016; Pain 2021.

of the environment that takes place in the present; following the new line of inquiry outlined above, do the present events of the *Iliad* show already a *wounded* earth and reveal a history of geotrauma that begins with the advent of the cosmos and continues through Iliadic time and space? Do we see this trauma emerge in the poem's verse and the groans of Gaia?

These inquiries can take us closer towards integrating the cultures of antiquity into our current ecocritical practice, what Schliephake sees as a "blind spot" in our environmental epistemology.[227] By returning to Homer and unearthing these ancient reflections and representations of the human-environment relationship and the impact of humans upon the earth, we can more closely trace a history of environmental thought in ancient literature. However, the analysis I have put forth in this thesis can also help us to think more intimately, and more personally, about our own relationship to the environment. Indeed, the Homeric depiction of the human-environment relationship, the destruction of the natural world, and its intersection with time demand that we evaluate our position in relation to the earth, its climate, and the role of human impact. In the *Iliad* and in the *Theogony*, setting the world on fire signals a moment of crisis and of significant change: the beginning of war and destruction, establishing new world orders, and quelling generational upheaval. Climate change is increasing the likelihood and intensity of extreme weather events and natural disasters in our lifetime—in California, my home state, this means wildfires. In 2018, the "Thomas" fire was the largest in California's history; since then, six subsequent fires have had that ominous distinction. The wildfires in California are literal signs of changes happening in our environment and are affecting the way we live our lives and experience

[227] Schliephake 2017, 3: "Notably, the premodern and ancient world has been left out of the scope of ecocritical exploration."

being human in the world; they are affecting our present and future, and often those in our most vulnerable communities suffer the most.

The Homeric "model" presented in this thesis—of a harmonious human-environment relationship in the past, human destruction of the natural world in the present, and a future that envisions an apocalyptic world where the environment subsumes and erases the human—can be viewed as a cautionary tale for our own time, much like Da Silva argues for the myth of Erysichthon,[228] about anthropogenic climate change, climate disasters, and the future of our world. We are *now* in a critical moment in our cosmic history: the earth is on fire, and flooding, intensified storms, and sea-level rise have created an escalating climate refugee crisis.[229] There is no question more urgent: how do we respond? Homer does not offer us the answer, but the *Iliad* does not present this post-human future as a foregone conclusion, either. It remains for us to reflect upon our relationship with the environment, with the earth, and to decide our course of action: will we resign ourselves to live out our lives, falling gently like the leaves of a tree, unbothered by the approaching fire that rages just far enough for our personal comfort? Or will we listen to the groans of Gaia, the cosmic agent who demands change, heed the call, and act so as to change this predicted future?

[228] Da Silva 2008, 116: "We remember that the purpose of this myth is a warning…"
[229] UNHCR 2016; Clarke and Shank 2019; Podesta 2019.

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