Tracing Homeric Metaphor

A dissertation presented

by

Alexander Stephen Williams Forte

to

The Department of the Classics

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

Classical Philology

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

April 2017
Tracing Homeric Metaphor

Abstract

How can one analyze the mind of an ancient poet, or of poets? To answer this question, this dissertation initiates an interdisciplinary treatment of the underlying metaphors in the Homeric Iliad and Odyssey using cognitive and historical linguistics. By applying linguistic methodology to poetics, I explore how these new approaches to metaphor reveal the compositional strategies of oral poetry.

I choose as a case study perhaps the most famous metaphor in Homeric poetry, epea pteroenta, “winged words,” showing how a novel combination of cognitive and historical linguistics can shed new light on this famous phrase. The phrase finds its closest analogs, from both a cognitive metaphorical and inherited phraseological standpoint, within the oldest strata of the Zoroastrian liturgy of ancient Iran and the Vedas of ancient India.

Accepting that our Homeric poems are the products of a long and dynamic tradition of oral poetry, my analysis of Patroclus’ burial in book 23 of the Iliad treats the relationship between narrative memory and poetic memory, and specifically posits that similes in book 22 of the Iliad, involving chases and racing, reveal metaphors that appear in Iliad 23. These metaphors are the basis of Homeric mnemonic and compositional techniques throughout the poems. The fourth chapter argues that nostos “return” was conceptualized as a chariot race, and life as a race against death, and that these conceptual metaphors were fully operative in the races in Patroclus’ funeral games, as well as received and transformed in the epics of Apollonius Rhodius and Virgil. The final chapter details the relationship between conceptual metaphors and allegory, arguing that Homeric poetry authorizes what one might call “allegorical” poetic interpretation, and that later epic authors knew as much.
# Table of Contents

Introduction: The Complexities of Metaphor vi

Chapter 1: Homeric Metaphor 1

Chapter 2: When Words Fall Short: ΕΠΕΑ ΠΤΕΡΟΕΝΤΑ 13

Chapter 3: The Burial of Patroclus and the Poetics of Memory 41

Chapter 4: The Chariot Race and Metaphors of the *Iliad* 65

Chapter 5: Homeric Templates of *Oionomanteia* and the Enigma of Allegory 105

Bibliography 145
To my family, teachers, friends, and N., ἐκ τῶν ὡν σὺκ ἄνευ.
Introduction: The Complexities of Metaphor

“The question, ‘How do metaphors work?’ is a bit like the question, ‘How does one thing remind us of another thing?’ There is no single answer to either question...”

- John Searle, from *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*

The metaphor operative in the title of this dissertation is intended to reflect both the form and goals of the research within. In presenting a methodology for studying metaphor in the earliest Greek poetry, this work will ideally be a step towards a complete study of figurative language in the Homeric epics. In this sense, the “trace” to which the title alludes may connote a careful outline of the various scholarly conceptualizations of metaphor and how they potentially apply to the analysis of Homeric poetry. Within the individual studies included, the dissertation will track the development of metaphorical language and thought over time, and this diachronic methodology will “trace” Homeric metaphor in this second sense. For the purposes of this work, “metaphor” will be an umbrella term referring to complex cognitive processes that interact with conventional and unconventional language. The concept of discrete, objective categories of literal and metaphorical language will be challenged, as will the notion of abstract lexical meaning divorced from context. The evidentiary basis for these premises is outlined below.

The purpose of this introduction is to explore the complexities of what we call “metaphor.”

Often, literary studies in Classics will characterize words or phrases as literal or metaphorical without explaining what is meant by these terms. This is an understandable state of affairs. The terms are pragmatically useful and intuitive, and by using them we are following in a tradition of rhetorical analysis at least as old as Aristotle. However, a closer look at the terms themselves reveals that they can

---

1 Searle 1979, 104.
produce an illusory concept of language that ultimately impedes nuanced poetic analysis by eliding important complexities in human thought and comprehension. The following is an exercise in articulating best practices.

Outside of studies specifically devoted to metaphor, there is a persistent idea that metaphor is, at its most basic, a poetic use of language that involves a novel equation of two terms, A and B. In the case of the metaphor “Achilles is a lion,” term A, “Achilles,” is referred to variously as the tenor or target, while term B, “lion” is called vehicle or source. How exactly to characterize the nature of the comparison between the two terms is the central source of theoretical debate. As an example of an early and highly sophisticated treatment of metaphor, under the scheme of I.A. Richards (1936), the conceptual space of comparison would be called the “ground.” The abovementioned conception of metaphor has been challenged in various ways since antiquity, in terms of metaphor’s supposedly “poetic” character and its purely linguistic basis. The academic fields involved in the discussion of metaphor, philosophy, pragmatics, cognitive linguists, semiotics, and literary studies, among others, have all offered major contributions, but often talk past one another due to both their different emphases and the daunting bibliography associated with each. An account of metaphor will necessarily at times interact with other instantiations of language and thought: metonymy, allegory, analogy, idiom, simile, and irony, but these categories will only be discussed when they are relevant to the issue

---

2 There are several studies which have collected and analyzed the classical approaches to metaphor (Stanford 1936, esp. 1–100; Silk 1974, esp. vii-xiii, 64–7; Kirby 1997; Innes 2003). On simile and comparison, see McCall 1969. From the viewpoint of intellectual history, it is important to note where these ancient theories overlap with more modern approaches to metaphor (see especially Zanker 2016, 164–190 on ancient and modern terminologies for metaphor).
at hand. One should not assume these distinctions to be natural or sufficiently justified simply because they are old.

First, a relevant theoretical distinction. In historical linguistics, there is always interplay between synchrony and diachrony, where synchronic analysis is from the perspective of an outsider looking at the state of a language in a defined period, and diachronic is from the perspective of an outsider looking at the wider historical development of language, or the evolution of a given model. Both of these perspectives are from a social anthropological view, etic, those of outsiders. There is no necessary claim of simulation of emic, or “insider” meaning. For speakers of modern languages, the line between synchronic and emic is sometimes blurred. For example, as a native speaker of English, I can easily adopt a synchronic view of certain varieties of American English, but only a diachronic view of American English over the past 300 years if I am studying its development using documentary evidence of earlier stages of the language. In the former case, though, it is difficult to separate in terms of “meaning” the synchronic from the emic.

The distinction between diachronic and synchronic will allow us to organize the various approaches to the study of lexical meaning. In the 19th century, the study of semantics, or the meaning of words, was largely diachronic, psychological, and decontextualized. The meanings of words, mapped over time, were thought to reveal the cognitive processes of their speakers, yet frequently the format of such studies was so dictionary-based that larger contextual significance was ignored.

---

3 The standard, normative working order of historical linguistics is synchronic analysis followed by diachronic analysis. Occasionally, one will find this order reversed, usually resulting from a conflation of diachrony and history, wherein diachrony is seen to be temporally prior to synchrony, and therefore is treated as logically prior. For a helpful discussion of these issues, see Barr 1995. Of course both synchrony and diachrony are constructs, the former by the delimitation of the time-period and the latter in terms of a construction of a model that evolves through time.
Structuralist semantics in the first half of the 20th century was essentially a reaction against these tendencies. The synchronic structures of language, those between words and between signifier and signified, became the focus of investigation. Ultimately, generative semantics, building off of the theories of Generative Grammar advanced primarily at MIT, borrowed elements of structuralism in the creation of a formalized system of meaning that was essentially synchronic and decontextualized. With the rise of cognitive linguistics and the accompanying field of cognitive semantics, there has been a shift towards a maximal view of meaning, which rejects the division between semantics and pragmatics, is psychological, and is more amenable to diachronic concerns.

Recent Approaches to Metaphor

The twentieth century saw sustained philosophical and literary critical inquiries into the nature of metaphor and its relationship to meaning and thought. The following will provide a brief outline of the various methods and conclude with theoretical reflections on the study of metaphor. In particular, the continental philosophical views of metaphor interact significantly with theories of cognitive linguistics, and their similarities and differences are worth exploring in the context of poetic analysis.

Defining the various approaches to metaphor sampling is also crucial before embarking on a study of metaphor. Nominal metaphors such as “Achilles is a lion” are relatively easy to identify and therefore make up the bulk of the material found in studies of metaphor. From the perspective of

---

4 Although as Harris (2001) has shown in painstaking detail, a large portion of mid-20th century scholarship that claims to proceed from Saussurian models has either misunderstood or manipulated de Saussure’s ideas to the point of occasional incoherency.

5 For an account of the breaking away from Generative Grammar by cognitive linguists, see R.A. Harris 1995. For a detailed history of lexical semantics, see Geeraerts 2010.
language history, these nominal metaphors tend to be diachronically transparent, yet they constitute the most infrequently occurring type of metaphor according to corpus-based research.

Verbal/predicative metaphors are much more prone to contextually conditioned semantic change. One may think of “to fly” as a standard way to express speedy travel without strong connotations of being airborne, or “bright” as a compliment on someone’s intellect. What generally is absent from most philosophical studies, White’s works excepted, are cases of extended metaphor that span across sentences and depend on extended context. For those interested in poetics, these are probably the most intriguing kinds of metaphors.

From a conceptual perspective, accounts of metaphor can be categorized into four major groups. Semantic twist analyses (following the terminology of Monroe Beardsley) of metaphor rely on the principal of a metaphorical framing effect, whereby the literal meanings of the focus/frame, tenor/vehicle, target/source interact in a process of negotiation whereby listeners alter or limit the meanings that attach to the focus/tenor/target at the point where the phrase can become intelligible. In “Achilles is a lion,” there is an interaction between the target, “Achilles,” and the source, “lion,” that produces a set of associated meanings that involve ferocity, bravery, physical prowess, exceptionalism, et al. which might not be present when talking about Achilles or a lion individually. Under Max Black’s terminology, the “lion” would be the focus and the rest of the sentence would be the literal frame. The most influential early semantic twist accounts are found in the works of Richards (1936),

---

6 This format largely follows that of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy’s entry on metaphor by David Hills (2012).
Black (1954), and Beardsley (1962). Although these accounts focus on lexical meaning rather than cognition, Richards ultimately characterizes metaphor as a mental process, “...when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of interaction.”\(^7\) In anticipating some aspects of the later cognitive theories of metaphor, he posits that “thought is itself metaphoric – not merely that it expresses itself in linguistic metaphors.”\(^8\) Further developments of this cognitivist stance are found in the works of Jacques Derrida (1976) and Paul Ricoeur (1975), who follow in the tradition of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. They advance the argument that metaphors are not simply an expression of linguistic creativity, but offer both a mediation of reality and a method of expressing it.\(^9\) Derrida’s further goal is to do away with a logocentric metaphysics of similarity by attacking Aristotle’s taxonomic categories of being (and his account of metaphor in terms of four categories).\(^10\) Ricoeur, on the other hand, attempts to realign metaphorical analysis to the level of the sentence and away from the

---

7 Beardsley (1958, 141) in an earlier work, gave the following definition of metaphor, “I propose that whenever an attribution is indirectly self-contradictory, and the modifier has connotations that could be attributed to the subject, the attribution is a metaphorical attribution, or metaphor.”

8 Richards 1936, 93.

9 Ibid, 73.

10 David West (2013) argues that Richards essentially anticipated this point, and is fundamentally mischaracterized as a formalist. Instead, he suggests that Richards is in many ways the founder of the field of cognitive stylistics, which is continued in the works of Joanna Gavins, Peter Stockwell, and Mark Turner. It has been plausibly argued that Giambattista Vico offered an even earlier “cognitive” approach to metaphor, see Danesi 1993.

11 Aristotle (Poet. 1457b6–9) defines four types of metaphorical transference: from genus to species, from species to genus, from species to species, and analogical/proportional, μετάφορα δὲ ἐστὶν ἐνόματος ἄλλοτριον ἐπιφορὰ ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους ἐπὶ ἔδος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἔδους ἐπὶ τὸ γένος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἔδους ἐπὶ ἔδος ἢ κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον. Aristotle’s penchant for defining four types of something (causes, characters, metaphors, and the logical square) may be a methodological quirk, or just an interesting coincidence.
word, which he sees as a fault in Aristotle’s framework. The implications of Aristotle’s system of logic and metaphysics for the study of metaphor will be discussed below under the truth-conditional and propositional/proportional systems of metaphorical study.

Within the somewhat nebulous categories of continental philosophy and post-structuralism, accounts of metaphor and metonymy, and of the relationship between the two, such as Lacan 1957 and Derrida 1976 owe much to Roman Jakobson’s influential article of 1956, “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aaphasic Disturbances,” in which he traces all thought to the binary categories of metaphor and metonymy based upon early research on aphasia, or language disorder. The research of targeted brain-damage and its effect on language and cognition contributes to the theory of the modular brain as advocated by Jerry Fodor and scholars of pragmatics. This theory is typically bound up with a mix of evolutionary biology (based on the claim that a modular brain would be evolutionarily advantageous) and early lesion-deficit approaches to language processing, in which researchers attempted to make one-to-one correspondences between certain brain regions and

12 Ricoeur 1975, 171, “En ce point où convergent notre troisième et notre quatrième études nous pouvons écrire: la métaphore est l’issue d’un débat entre prédication et dénomination; son lieu dans le langage est entre les mots et les phrases.”

13 Earlier Russian and Polish literary scholars, most prominently Freidenberg and Kruszewski, also dealt with the theory of metaphor, with the former analyzing the systems of metaphors within myths, and the latter, in anticipating Jakobson, positing that metaphor and metonymy were basic ways of thinking. Albertelli (1985) observes an inconsistency, or more charitably, a classificatory confusion, in Jakobson’s description of the grammatical paradigm. Drake 2002 and Harris 2001, 94–108 are sustained and polemical critiques of the article and of Jakobson’s reception of de Saussure. Ricoeur 1975, 221–72 engages with Jakobson’s theory of metaphorical substitution and argues instead for an idea of metaphorical predication, “Mais, à la différence de Roman Jakobson, ce qui dans la métaphore peut être généralisé, ce n’est pas son essence substitutive, mais son essence prédicative. Jakobson généralisait un phénomène sémiotique, la substitution d’un terme par un autre; nous généralisons un phénomène sémantique, l’assimilation l’une à l’autre de deux aires de signification par le moyen d’une attribution insolite (252).” For an interactive model of metaphor and metonymy that focuses on ancient Greek poetry, see Nagy 2015.
linguistic or interpretative faculties. More modern aphasic research has demonstrated that
situation is much more complex: in a given situation multiple brain regions contribute to a single
process ("degeneracy"), and a single region of the brain can also contribute to multiple cognitive
processes ("pluripotentiality"). To quote Alberto Caramazza, “Given this clinical reality, it is rather
difficult to isolate the functional components implicated in a deficit, and nearly impossible to locate
the laboriously identified mechanisms in distinct parts of the brain areas that are damaged.” Lesion-
based approaches can only offer correlational evidence, and a coherent, binary model of metaphor and
metonymy cannot be built on traditional aphasic research.

Comparativist accounts, such as Tversky 1977 and Fogelin 1986 operate on the assumption that
metaphors are elliptical similes or comparisons. This is essentially a reversal of the Aristotelian position,
which suggests that simile is metaphor with an added word of comparison. Ortony 1979 is potentially
the first sustained “modern” cognitivist account of metaphor, and also opts for the comparativist view.
An obvious objection to these accounts is that nominal metaphors are not reversible without a
significant drop in comprehensibility or a change in the ground or tertium comparationis ("Achilles is a

---

14 In terms of the legacy of this older approach, Jakobson 1956 interprets evidence from idiosyncratic early aphasic research and carries its influence into the treatments of Lacan and Derrida.


16 Chatterjee (2005) calls for an integration of lesion-based and imaging approaches.

lion” ≠ “A lion is Achilles”), but similes are less effected by reversibility. As extended and convincing critiques of the comparativist position, the recent works of John Barnden and Adam Gargani are fundamental. Moreover, simile does not drive polysemy in the same way as metaphor. For example, the reason why English “take” can be used in sentences such as “She took her coat” and “I take your point” is because the physical action of controlling an object is metaphorically conceptualized as accepting a concept. There is no comparable process associated with simile. In chapter 3, I will provide a case-study of this contrast between simile and metaphor in Homeric poetry.

The third type of metaphorical analysis is the brute force account, which posits no particular change in meaning of the words, but only a cognitive effect by virtue of the juxtaposition of the primary/secondary subject, the tenor/vehicle, target/source. This approach is most famously found in the work of Donald Davidson (1976) and later, Roger White (1996). The work of Richard Moran refers to this juxtaposition as a “framing effect.” These accounts presuppose the theoretically distinct category of literal meaning; as White writes, “There is no reason to suppose that if we tried to view

---

18 See Chiappe et al. 2003. This parade-example of metaphor and simile is from Arist. Poetics 1406b 20–3.

19 Barnden 2012 and 2016 (which is revised yet significantly compressed in its discussion of “mediator carefulness”) challenge the usefulness of the comparison vs. categorization debate and devise a new set of criteria to discuss the differences between similes and metaphors. For a different take, see specifically Gargani 2014, 170–223, which concludes, “Similes are comparisons deployed to communicate poetic effects.” This is also updated in Gargani 2016.

20 On metaphor and metonymy and their role in grammaticalization and semantic change, see Hopper and Traugott 2003, 84–93. On metaphor and its role in polysemy, see Sweetser 1990. For a theoretical treatment of the various conceptual processes driving polysemy, see Blank 2003.

21 Moran (1989) in moving away from an analysis of metaphor in terms of assertion or denial, describes two theoretical components of metaphor, the perspectival effect of “framing” and the beliefs that underlie the production of the metaphor.
such a linguistic hybrid (i.e. metaphor) as a literal sentence, the result would be anything other than nonsense.”

The fourth type, also called the conversational twist or pragmatic account, tends to operate with an idea of a primary, literal meaning of the “words” and a secondary, figurative meaning of the “speaker.” Paul Grice (1967, 1975) and John Searle (1979/1993) are the two most famous proponents of the standard pragmatic model of metaphor. Their theories are predicated upon either the more basic status of literal language that is context-independent (Grice), or a penalty in processing time for metaphors within a system that construes literal meaning as linguistic meaning (Searle). Many philosophical accounts of metaphor still operate in a Gricean framework, and a fully developed truth-conditional concept of language comprehension is at least as old as the work of Gottlob Frege (1892).

This system ultimately owes much to the metaphysics, logic and rhetoric of Aristotle. To use metaphor well, according to Aristotle, is to have an eye for resemblance. Moreover, Aristotle’s commitment to analogical appropriateness in metaphor within rhetoric is conceptually comparable to the fundamental use of syllogism in logic, both of which are subsumed under his larger conceptual principle of a metaphysical logos (with metaphor under the umbrella of lexis). The principles of organization and use in metaphysics, logic and language for Aristotle were deeply interrelated. The analytical-philosophical supposition that predicational metaphors and their literal meanings should be the basis of investigation into metaphorical language is basically Aristotelian.

22 White 1996, 204.

23 Arist. *Poet.* 1459a.7–8, τὸ γὰρ εὖ μεταφέρειν τὸ τὸ ὄμοιον θεωρεῖν ἐστιν. The visual nature of metaphor here and in the note below suggests that Aristotle’s conception of metaphor had cognitive implications.

A different model of pragmatic metaphor comprehension is advanced by Daniel Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, who emphasize the contextual nature of speech, and do not theorize a different way of processing metaphorical and literal language. They posit three primary types of meaning: the logical form of the utterance, which is the most minimal form of the expression, the utterance’s explicatures, which are truth-verifiable and approximate the standard model’s definition of literality, and the implicatures of the utterance, which are logically independent pragmatic enrichments (essentially contextual implications). In their Relevance Theory, human communication is a balance between, on the one hand, the cognitive effort of language production and comprehension, and on the other, the relevance of a given utterance for the situation at hand. The work of “Neo-Griceans” such as Laurence Horn (2004) has a complex theoretical relationship to the work of relevance theorists such as Sperber, Wilson and Robyn Carston, insofar as the emphasis is shifted to utterance comprehension and away from the concept of speaker meaning.\(^{25}\) Their model for describing the processing of loose language (including both literal and metaphorical language) is refined by Carston (2002) who introduces the *ad hoc* concept, a pragmatic attempt to account for metaphors with emergent meaning, such as “Andrew is a bulldozer.” In this model, during processing there would be an online creation of a concept *bulldozer, with specific semantic loosenings (of the machine’s characteristics to humans) and

\[^{25}\text{As detailed in Carston 2005. Stern 2006, 245 summarizes some of these distinctions nicely: “Therefore, if we count the latter as the literal meaning of the utterance, the contextually enriched meaning should count as non-literal meaning. But this raises the question whether the context autonomously — independently of linguistic constraints — makes this enrichment to what is intuitively said or whether the contextual input is filtered through a more abstract level of linguistic representation that underlies the surface structure of the concrete sentence uttered. In the current controversy, Contextualists take the former position, Literalists or Indexicalists, the latter. A parallel controversy involves contextual operations called ‘loosening’ and ‘semantic transfer’ (which corresponds to the classical figure of metonymy). Metaphor, finally, comes in but only at the end of the story, and it is explained or analyzed in terms of one of these more basic kinds of operations — enrichment, loosening, or semantic transfer. This attempt to reduce metaphor to one of the other modes of non-literal meaning makes good methodological sense. But the fact is that ‘the paradigm case of non-literal meaning’, as Recanati (2004, 76) calls metaphor, gets relatively short shrift in this story.”}\]
narrowings (referring specifically to mental attributes) to accommodate the context-specific, emergent meaning of “headstrong.” 26 Within the category of loose use, literal and metaphorical language are seen as opposite ends of a continuum. 27 Therefore, there is no sharp distinction between metaphorical and literal meaning in RT approaches to language. In contrast to cognitive linguists, scholars of pragmatics generally theorize a modular mind, following Jerry Fodor (1983), as opposed to a general embodied cognition.

The Cognitive Turn

Outside of these four major types but interacting with elements of each, especially of the phenomenologically oriented semantic twist accounts, are the so-called cognitive approaches to metaphor. Some still retain categories that approximate the traditional definition of literality. Like the pragmatic accounts, these tend to theorize the processing of metaphorical utterances as an online cognitive process. Rachel Giora (2003) advances a graded-salience hypothesis (GSH) of metaphorical comprehension which posits an automatic accessing of the “salient” meanings of words even when they are used metaphorically or in metaphorical phrases. Giora defines a meaning as salient:

“...if it is coded in the mental lexicon and enjoys prominence due to exposure (e.g., familiarity, frequency, conventionality) or cognitive factors (e.g., prototypicality), regardless of degree of nonliteralness (e.g., the nonliteral curl up and die, the literal body and soul, the literal and metaphoric sharp, the sarcastic big deal, read my lips, the literal plant meaning of tree). A meaning is less-salient if it is coded but scores low on these variables, regardless of degree of nonliteralness (e.g., the literal, riverside meaning of bank; the nonliteral diagram meaning of tree). A meaning or an interpretation

26 On this see also Carston 2011, which features a discussion of the literal/nonliteral distinction and contrasts metaphorical understanding with ironic understanding.

27 For more on the concept of a literal-figurative continuum, see Giora 2002; Katz and Ferretti 2001.
that is not coded is *nonsalient*; it is novel or derived, regardless of degree of nonliteralness (e.g., the literal *body and sole*; the nonliteral *Weapons of mass construction*).\footnote{See Giora 2014, 334. For a more sustained argument for the GSH as against the direct access or standard pragmatic view, see Giora 2008.}

However, Giora’s attempt to subsume conventionality into salience is probably too general and obscures several dimensions of conventionality: lexical, cognitive, and situational, as pointed out by Martínez-Manrique and Vicente 2013. Secondly, the strong claim that salient meanings of words and phrases are always accessed regardless of context seems to be contradicted by a growing body of psychological and neuroscientific evidence.\footnote{Gibbs and Colston 2012, 90–1 point out weaknesses in the GSH and provide references to experimental results which demonstrate that contextual knowledge is not secondary to linguistic or lexical knowledge (Kamide 2008; McRae and Matsuki 2009; Van Berkum et al. 2005). See below for a survey of the relevant neuroscientific evidence.}

The weaker claim, that multiple dimensions of lexical meaning are accessed under certain circumstances, is completely believable.

Finally, there is the direct access view of metaphorical processing, advanced by Raymond Gibbs, which posits that meaning is entirely contextually conditioned and that given favorable circumstances there is no necessary recruitment of a “literal” meaning of a metaphor.\footnote{For an extended account and defense of the direct access view, see Gibbs and Colston 2012, 62–84.} This is essentially a weaker claim about language comprehension that is context-based. It is consistent with the occasionally contradictory experimental outcomes that show, depending on context, figurative language can be processed faster than, equal to, or slower than literal language. It also makes no claim that literal lexical meaning cannot interact with figurative meaning of an idiomatic or proverbial phrase. Depending on context, a phrase such as “to kick the bucket” will cause the listener or reader to pay attention to the lexical meaning of “bucket” instead of only extracting the figurative meaning of “death” from the phrase as a whole, even if this context is poetic. For example, “He was never fond of
farm work, but he couldn’t avoid kicking the bucket.” Regardless of the experimental complexities, the standard pragmatic model, which posits that metaphorical language is necessarily processed secondarily or slowly as compared to literal language, has been seriously undermined by modern experimental data in processing times of metaphorical utterances (Gibbs 1994, Glucksberg 2001).31

In evaluating the various theories introduced above, it is important to note that research from pragmatics, psychology, and cognitive linguistics has essentially undermined the notion of a theoretically useful definition of “literal” meaning. First is the issue of terminology. Various approaches to “literality” will variously and implicitly treat it as (following Gibbs and Colston 2012): coded meaning, minimal meaning, what is said, linguistic meaning, compositional meaning, conventional meaning, semantic meaning, salient meaning, default meaning, context-invariant or context-free meaning, and truth-conditional meaning.32 These categories are neither exhaustive nor internally consistent, and essentially ignore context-sensitive and enriched pragmatic knowledge. For example, if one says “I haven’t had coffee” one might under a model of minimal propositional understanding paraphrase this as “I haven’t had coffee (by this point)” with an implied terminus ante quem of the conversation at hand. However, an enriched pragmatic understanding of the sentence would almost necessarily provide a terminus post quem of “today.” Even completely literal phrases have a complex relationship both to their immediate contexts and to extra-linguistic knowledge.

31 For more on these positions, see Ariel 2002, 361–70. For a discussion of research on lexical ambiguity resolution and polysemy, see Gibbs and Colston 2012, 65–6.

32 Gibbs 2005; Gibbs and Colston 2012, 22. Ariel 2002, while pointing out methodological problems with previous attempts, works to salvage some theoretically useful types of “literal” meaning. She posits the three types of minimal meaning: linguistic meaning, salient meaning, and privileged interactional interpretation.
One might even consider “literal” to be a historically metaphorical description of language that textualizes the auditory and temporal phenomenon of speech. The supposed essential truth of a statement is in its letters (Latin *litterae*, pl.). In ancient Greek, the adjectives closest to “literal” engage in entirely different metaphorical mappings. Gk. *χυρός* is an adjective of sociopolitical authority, and in a democratic context would have referred to the intersubjective consensus of a δήμος on a point of verbal usage. If a word is *χυρός*, it is authoritative by virtue of convention (Arist. *Rhet.* 1404b6, 1404b31). Gk. *ἀκριβής* refers prototypically in the fifth century to sharpness, physical and abstract (mental or otherwise), and can perhaps be translated as “exact” or “precise” when referring to a word’s conventional meaning (Plat. *Rep.* 342d), implying a continuum of usage from “sharpness/precision” to “bluntness/diffusion.” In terms of its embodied associations with fine-motor control, it is generally similar to the use of L. *subtilis* “fine” to refer to a manner of speaking that is “exact” (Cic. *Or.* 20).

Likewise, those who claim that “metaphorical meaning” is primary fail to understand this is ultimately a synchronic, subjective classification that is open to contextually specific judgments of, among others, discourse genre, frequency of usage, and history of usage. In certain contexts, metaphorical language is processed more quickly than literal language. There have been recent attempts to categorize various types of metaphors, one of the most recent being that of Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Pérez Hernández (2011). Dividing the metaphors by source domain, they attempt to make an initial distinction between non-structural metaphors (orientational “Prices are high”; ontological “Achilles is a lion”; imagistic “Raven-haired”) and structural metaphors, within which there are two subcategories, situational (non-scenic “Her heart was in her mouth”; scenic “He left with

---

33 See Kennedy 2007, 198 n.15.
his tail between his legs”), and non-situational (non-topological “She attacked my position”; topological image-schematic “She is in deep trouble”; topological image-based “The fringed curtain of thine eyes”). These attempts at categorization are useful insofar as they point out the variety of metaphors, but one could easily object to the categories even as they stand above. Could “Achilles is a lion” not be interpreted as imagistic, even implying something as mundane as Achilles’ unshorn hair in comparison to the lion’s mane? Part of the metaphorical process’ power is its ability to involve multiple dimensions of meaning through implication. There is simply no evidence to suggest that any type of meaning is cognitively primary.

This testable hypothesis, that a hearer’s or reader’s understanding of “literal” meaning does not precede more “figurative” understanding, essentially vitiates the conclusions of accounts of metaphor based on the primacy of literal meaning and truth-conditional considerations. It would seem that philosophical accounts that attempt to deny metaphorical meaning, such as Davidson and White, have at some level the right idea insofar as they intuit a problem with two theoretical categories of meaning, but they adopt the wrong approach.

The field of linguistics that seeks to align itself with modern neuroscience while simultaneously advancing certain positions of phenomenology is cognitive linguistics, which theorizes metaphor as an

---

34 Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Pérez Hernández 2011, 170.

35 An alternative strategy was adopted in the 19th century by Friedrich Nietzsche, who claimed that metaphor is intrinsic to human concepts of truth. Nietzsche’s most extensive work on metaphor is the essay “Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne,” on which see recently Scheibenberger 2016. On Nietzsche’s philosophy of metaphor and its relationship to strands of 20th-century criticism, see Hinman 1982. The philosophical work of Hans Blumenberg also analyzes metaphor as primarily a cognitive process, and introduces a historically oriented “metaphorology.” His metaphysically oriented account of catachresis will remind many of Heidigger and Derrida. For a history of philosophical uses of metaphor, see Haverkamp 2007, 7–102. Haverkamp 2007, 109–63 advances a new philosophal theory of metaphor.
entrenched cognitive process. On the other hand, scholars working in pragmatics focus on the online processing of metaphorical language.\textsuperscript{36} Among the so-called cognitive approaches to metaphor, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) have brought the most attention to the idea of metaphorical language’s relationship to metaphorical thinking.\textsuperscript{37} The current scholarly consensus largely reflects the influential position of this so-called Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT, also known as CTM or “Contemporary Theory of Metaphor”), wherein metaphor is a method of thinking that finds its expression in language. Many call this process “analogy,” which itself is an old spatial metaphor (ἀναλογία) of physical proportion that has become conceptually abstracted.\textsuperscript{38} Metaphorical types pervasive in our daily language, like MORE IS UP, SIMILARITY IS CLOSENESS, IMPORTANCE IS PHYSICAL SIZE, PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, are thought to reflect mental processes that are “embodied,” or grounded in our sensory and motor experience. These are so-called “primary metaphors” due to their supposedly irreducible and universal status (notionally due to embodiment’s universal applicability to humans across cultures). These primary metaphors can then combine into complex metaphors such as THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS, composed of STRUCTURE IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE and PERSISTING IS REMAINING ERECT (Grady 1997a). Crucially, this approach is an empirical, naturalistic appeal to sensory perception: we can identify metaphor because we can verify using our senses that physical closeness does not necessarily denote similarity, nor

\textsuperscript{36} For a sophisticated and thorough summary of the modern linguistic approaches to figurative language processing, see Gibbs and Colston 2012, 58–127.

\textsuperscript{37} See Steen 2007, 3–71 for an outline of the various theoretical difficulties and individual theoretical approaches to metaphor from a cognitive perspective. As he points out (47), these cognitive/psychological approaches tend to collapse grammar and usage into the category of “language,” which may not be satisfying to those who are more linguistically inclined.

\textsuperscript{38} Dancyger and Sweetser 2014, 84–5.
does physical size necessarily denote importance. If one radically denies the reliability of the senses for this kind of reasoning, this approach falls apart.

Canonical CMT focuses on entrenched metaphors that have a unidirectional basis: in all the primary metaphors above, the metaphorical relationship is not applied in both directions; one can say, “we’re close in age” = “we’re similar in age” but “we live similarly to one another” ≠ “we live close to one another.” Insofar as Lakoff and Johnson (1999) posit that primary metaphors are grounded in bodily experience, or “embodied,” CMT in this regard is essentially compatible with the continental phenomenological tradition of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre.\(^39\) A potential issue with CMT, as discussed below, is that in its attempts to emphasize the cognitive nature of metaphor, it simultaneously downplays cultural factors that contribute to metaphorical systems in languages.\(^40\) Since 2009, Lakoff, Sweetser, Lederer, Wehling, Berson and Narayanan, building on latter’s STDP (spike-timing dependent plasticity) theory, have recently developed a neural theory of language that attempts to explain metaphorical interpretation in terms of specific neuro-biological structures and processes.\(^41\) Andrew Goatly, within a work that discusses the interaction between biology and culture

\(^{39}\) This is even examined from a distributed cognitive perspective, in which human cognition interacts with and involves extra-bodily factors in the surrounding environment. An approach that seeks to integrate these two models is the Words as social Tools (WAT) theory (Borghi et al. 2013).

\(^{40}\) There have also been objections to the privileging of English and of Indo-European languages more generally in the construction of “embodied” primary metaphors. As a healthy corrective to this tendency, see Casad and Palmer (eds.) 2003 and Maalej and Yu (eds.) 2011.

\(^{41}\) See Lakoff 2012; 2014.
in the creation of metaphorical systems, characterizes these attempts as potential examples of biological reductionism.42

Even within the cognitive approach to metaphor, there are important theoretical distinctions. The approach of Lakoff and Johnson is essentially a two-domain approach, that of target and of source. A recent CMT-influenced account defines metaphor as a “unidirectional relation between two conceptual domains (the source domain and the target domain) which sets up links (mappings) between specific elements of the two domains’ structures. A conceptual connection of this kind may be further reflected in metaphoric expressions, linguistic usages of source-domain forms to refer to corresponding aspects of the target domain.”43 In contrast to the comparativist approach outlined above, which has roots in both philosophical and cognitive approaches in its attempt to equate metaphor and simile, the categorization/class-inclusion model (Glucksberg 2001) posits that the metaphorical source is part of a conceptual category and that metaphor processing involves specific attributions from this category to the target. Glucksberg, however, in contrast to CMT, denies that metaphorical structure is neurally encoded in individuals’ brains and shapes thought. Bowdell and Gentner 2005 presents a diachronic variation of this approach in their career of metaphor model, in which it is posited that novel metaphors function as elliptical similes (they are comparisons), but as they become conventionalized they can be either comparisons or categorizations. Giles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2002) provided their own account of metaphor, conceptual integration theory (CIT);

42 Goatly 2007, 392–3. Other cultural approaches to metaphor are Kövecses (2005, 2006), who adopted a cultural model in part due to the criticisms of Geeraerts and Grondelaers 1995. Gevaert 2005 is a diachronic treatment of anger metaphors in English sources which tracks changes in metaphors according to the rise of popularity of humoral theory in the 15th century. Further criticisms of CMT along this line are found in Cameron 2011; Evans 2004; Zinken 2007.

43 Dancygier and Sweetser 2014, 14.
this theory involves the notion of mental spaces, also called conceptual packets, which are integrated through “blending.” This in part attempts to account for emergent meaning in metaphors like “Andrew is a bulldozer.” or “That doctor is a butcher.” where the subject of the sentence is implied to have characteristics not strictly speaking associated with conventional uses of the predicate noun. Bulldozers are not mentally stubborn, and butchers are not necessarily sloppy or violent. In contrast to CMT, Fauconnier and Turner’s CIT preoccupies itself with the online processing of more novel metaphors, in which conceptual domains are “blended” together. Therefore, it is more in direct competition with the field of pragmatics, which seeks to understand how we construe meaning contextually within conversation. It also is a theoretical model of multiple spaces, and is not as limited to the two-domain model of target and source that is found in the earlier works of Lakoff and Johnson. This approach is applied to the concept of Love’s arrows in Greco-Roman antiquity in Pagán Cánovas 2011. It is certainly a productive way of dealing with complex metaphor, such as the Grim Reaper, and I will attempt to apply some of its methodology to metaphors in Homeric Greek.44 However, its elaborate terminology, itself highly metaphorical (in terms of space), seems to result in the following situation: complex metaphors (“blending” of “spaces”) are used to explain complex metaphors in usage. This is basically a meta-metaphor, as Ritchie 2004 points out in a sustained and balanced criticism of CIT and its use of complex metaphors as a heuristic mechanism. As far I can tell, none of the practitioners of CIT has responded to this criticism in any meaningful way. In what is perhaps indicative of this state of affairs, Barbara Dancygier, in her important application of blending theory to literary narrative (2012), lists Ritchie 2004 in the bibliography, but I can find no trace of Ritchie’s

44 On the Grim Reaper, see Fauconnier and Turner 2002, 291–5. One should note that the account is completely ahistorical.
criticisms in the text or footnotes of the book itself. The terminology of CIT can lead to obscurantism, but it can also be effective in precisely pointing out the complexities of certain metaphors.

Worth highlighting is CMT’s primary concern with conventional metaphorical language as representing subconscious and deeply encoded mental structures. It has been objected that positing language as revealing thought and then analyzing metaphorical language within that conceptual framework is circular (McGlone 2001). Cognitive linguists and psychologists in recent years have increasingly emphasized experimental design and empirical data in these allegations of circularity, although the interpretation and assumptions of some of this research are more complicated than they seem. Below is a review of the neuroscientific evidence in the processing of language.

Neuroscientific Evidence

In terms of the techniques for neurological imaging, the two major methods are functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), and electroencephalography (EEG). In broad terms, these technologies are becoming increasingly sensitive in their measurement of cognitive processes, but can tell us very little about the nature of these processes. In this regard, neurological imaging has similar explanatory limitations to the lesion-based approach to aphasia. The technology of fMRI allows one to measure activation of the brain via the measurement of blood flow. As an example of EEG, the N400

---

45 For a critical review of Fauconnier and Turner 2002, see also Forceville 2004.

46 For attempts to combine the pragmatic account of metaphorical processing in Relevance Theory and CMT in a hybrid model, see Csatár 2014; Gibbs and Tendahl 2008; Stöver 2010; Rashidin and Jalaluddin 2014; Tendahl 2009.

47 See Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Pérez Hernández 2011 for an extended summary and defense of CMT with additional methodological suggestions. In particular, they recognize that the categorization of the various types of metaphors needs to be more precise and standardized within scholarship.
is characterized by electrical activity on the scalp corresponding to brain activity and is correlated with semantic processing. The N400 is an example of an event-related potential (ERP), or a measured brain response that is a direct result of a specific sensory, cognitive, or motor event; it takes its name from its characteristics: a negative-going (N) deflection that peaks at around 400 milliseconds after the stimulus in question. There are relatively serious controversies about what stage in processing and comprehension the N400 represents, but it is generally associated with memory accessing and semantic comprehension (Kutas and Hillyard 1980; Kutas and Federmeier 2011). Eye-tracking studies operate on the fact that the right hemisphere of the brain controls the left field of vision, and vice versa. One can make inferences about the role of the two hemispheres in the processing of textual language by, among other things, manipulating the position of the text within the subject’s field of vision and measuring comprehension times and accuracy.

Researchers in cognitive science and psychology have attempted to use EEG, fMRI and eye-tracking techniques to determine whether metaphorical and literal language are processed in different regions of the brain. The left hemisphere (LH) of the brain has been traditionally associated with language processing since the beginning of neurological research into language and the discovery of Broca’s and Wernicke’s areas. There is a tremendous amount of sometimes contradictory experimental evidence on the role of the right hemisphere (RH) in the processing of figurative and/or novel language. Traditionally, there was a theorized relationship between RH activation and metaphor-processing. Experimental data have seemingly demonstrated that schizophrenic patients, who already have trouble interpreting metaphors in comparison to neurotypicals, also have reduced activation in the RH and increased activation in the LH, particularly the inferior and middle frontal gyri (LIFG and LMFG, respectively) during attempted metaphor interpretation (Mashal et al. 2013). However, even in
studies examining neurotypicals, the LIFG has been implicated in conventional metaphorical processing, with the left temporal pole and left posterior superior temporal sulcus playing a role in more novel metaphorical processing (Forgács et al. 2012). The LIFG famously is the site of Broca’s area, and is generally implicated in language production and object recognition. The communis opinio at this stage is that the RH is activated in the processing of novel language, not of figurative language.

In a meta-analysis of fMRI studies of figurative language processing Rapp et al. (2012) conclude that a predominantly “left lateralisied network, including the left and right inferior frontal gyrus; the left, middle, and superior temporal gyrus; and medial prefrontal, superior frontal, cerebellar, parahippocampal, precentral, and inferior parietal regions,” is important for non-literal expressions. Forgács et al. (2014) designed an experiment using 288 Hungarian noun-adjective word-pairs of conventional literal, novel literal, conventional metaphorical, and novel metaphorical expressions along with eye-tracking technology to determine the region of processing. They concluded that conventionalized metaphors are processed more accurately and quickly in the left hemisphere and that the right hemispheric account of metaphor processing may be influenced by uncontrolled experimental variables. They also provide additional evidence against the graded-salience model and the serial processing model of literal and figurative meaning by demonstrating that novel metaphorical and novel literal language are processed with equal speed and accuracy. However, conventional metaphors were found to be processed slower than conventional literal language.48

---

48 What may vitiate some of the fine-grained analysis of the study is that the authors do not clearly define the criteria used to classify an expression as metaphorical or literal. They provide a list of 32 example expressions which seem to be reasonably classified, but this is only one-ninth of the material. Moreover, the expressions have been translated from Hungarian, and so the data-set can only be analyzed and verified as reflecting a degree of synchronic, subjective accuracy by a fluent speaker of Hungarian.
In contrast, Diaz et al. (2011) found in their fMRI study that both figurativeness and novelty influenced RH recruitment. However, they also found that both novel and conventional metaphors were associated with activation in the right inferior frontal and temporal regions. They concluded that metaphors were associated with greater activation than literal sentences in bilateral inferior frontal gyri, left medial superior frontal gyrus, left anterior inferior temporal gyrus, left anterior middle temporal gyrus, left posterior middle temporal gyrus, and right temporal pole. On the other hand, literal stimuli were associated with greater activation than metaphoric stimuli in right superior, medial frontal gyri. Activation in right inferior frontal gyrus and right temporal pole was significantly associated with metaphoricity. After conducting pair-wise comparisons of novel metaphors with novel literal sentences and familiar metaphors with familiar literal sentences, they found that familiar metaphors elicited significantly greater activation than familiar literal sentences in left inferior frontal gyrus, left inferior temporal gyrus, and left middle temporal gyrus.\footnote{In terms of experimental design, Diaz et al. 2011 used standardized lists of metaphors published in scholarly journals: Katz, Paivio, and Marschark 1985; Katz, Paivio, Marschark, and Clark 1988.} There seems to be an overlap here between where neurotypicals process conventional metaphors and where schizophrenics process novel metaphors. However, they found no significant differences between novel metaphors and novel literal sentences. This is a striking finding, and perhaps indicates a more important angle of investigation for imaging studies. The findings of Bohrn, Altmann, and Jacobs 2012 suggest that left frontotemporal regions of the brain are activated in metaphor processing in general, but RH activation only occurred during the
processing of novel metaphors. This further supports the hypothesis that a processing advantage in the RH is related to novelty, not figurativeness.

An fMRI meta-analysis by Yang (2014) appears to confirm that RH recruitment is due to novelty and/or task specific conditions, and not figurativeness. This is another blow to the serial and graded-salience processing models of metaphor comprehension, which would predict that metaphorical interpretation necessarily presupposes access to an underlying “non-metaphorical” meaning. Faust and Kenett (2014) present a theory of hemispheric integration in natural language processing, building on the Bilateral semantic Access, Integration, and Selection model (BAIS; Jung-Beeman 2005) with a comprehensive technical bibliography. In treating the LH as the area of fine, specific neural processing and the RH as that of coarse, general neural processing, they attempt to make a case for an interactive hemispheric model of language comprehension. They conclude that, “these two principles (functional segregation and integration) are at the basis of the cognitive task of metaphor processing: while a functional segregation of hemispheric systems operates on complementary types of stimuli, only through semantic integration is efficient metaphor processing achieved.” While emphasizing the relatively strong case for novel metaphor being associated with coarse, generalized semantic processing in RH, they call for a more holistic approach to language processing.

---

50 They also attempt to localize regions of the brain that process ironic/sarcastic statements against those that feature in metaphorical interpretation, and found that interpretation of irony and sarcasm correlated with midline activation of the medFG, ACC and cuneus/precuneus (which also were activated in literal language interpretation).

51 On this also see Giora 2014.

52 Faust and Kenett 2014, 8.
comprehension. This appears to be justified by the nature of the contradictory results in the experimental data regarding RH and LH processing for literal and metaphorical language.

What applies to all experiments is the potential for pre-experimental factors to influence the cognitive state of the subjects. If the language used in the immediate lead-up to the study, e.g. instructional, introductory, was primarily conventional literal language, one would expect a contextual priming effect for conventional literal language. Likewise if the researchers spoke or presented instructions in conventional metaphorical language, one would expect a conventional metaphorical priming effect. One of the major challenges facing researchers in these fields is the reduction of experimental variability and the increase of experimental controls. Given what we know about the natural variety in speaker identity and idiolect (and consequently the varieties in speaker judgment of “metaphoricity”), it would probably be scientifically prudent to at least have a standard collection of noun-adjective word pairs that researchers working in a given field would use to elicit responses in the experimental subjects. Due to the contradictory results of various experiments, a potentially more revealing meta-analysis of imaging results would examine if there were any regions of the brain which were never activated in processing literal language, even at its most novel. At this stage, it seems entirely possible to interpret the divergent experimental results, both in reading time and imaging studies, to indicate that there is no evidence for hard neurological distinction between “metaphorical” and “literal” meaning. These two “types of meaning” might be terms of convenience rather than opposed theoretical categories.

The reality of the situation appears to be that certain usages of language are processed in regions of our brain not used in the processing of the most conventional language, but that this
processing is not necessarily slower or more laborious, it simply requires activation in other areas of our brains. Linguistic conventionality, too, is subjective, but can be compared to larger trends of usage by recourse to corpus-data. The judgment of metaphoricity, on the other hand, seems to have enough individual variance that a corpus of metaphor will be much more difficult to compile. This variance may even exist within an individual’s lifetime. Mashal et al. (2011) found that older adults regularly rate fewer expressions as metaphorically plausible in comparison to younger adults. They also rated fewer expressions as novel and more expressions as familiar. This may reflect an interaction between accumulated knowledge and neurological changes associated with aging. Kavé et al. (2014) concluded on the basis of eye-tracking that older adults, when compared to younger adults, had a LH advantage when processing conventional metaphors. This correlational evidence could indicate that accumulated knowledge leads to “conventionalization” of metaphors over time and/or that processes of aging facilitate left hemispheric lateralization in semantic comprehension. Iskandar (2014) found that aging correlated with a decreased ability to interpret novel metaphors and hypothesized that this was related to a reduction in fluid cognitive processes.

In any case, the most recent evidence suggests that the RH is activated by novel language, rather than figurative language. The specific areas involved in the processing of “metaphorical” language seem to vary based on the individual, the context, and the type of metaphor (requiring encyclopedic knowledge, spatial reasoning, et al.). If one feels a word to be a “metaphor,” this is still a subjective judgment, but it is one likely bound up with the recruitment of individualized neurological

---

5) For an attempt to make a system of metaphor identification with an explicit methodology, see the work of the Pragglejaz Group 2007.
resources (e.g. bilateral temporal poles, [pre-]motor cortex) that have an imperfect overlap with the processing of conventional language. If activity in the RH is associated with more generalized semantic processing, and shows increased activation during the comprehension of novel metaphorical and literal language, whereas the LH is associated with the processing of conventional literal language, where does this leave conventional metaphor? On the one hand, there appears to be a trend in the imaging data that indicates conventional metaphor is associated with activation in the left gyri, particularly the LIFG, which is implicated in visual object recognition. However, the even this limited generalization may be doomed from the start due to experimental inconsistency or (potentially) variability even within the conventionalization process. Cardillo et al. (2012) found that by repeatedly exposing test subjects to a metaphor, they found a “tuning effect,” or a gradual decrease in activation, in the bilateral inferior frontal gyri (including the LIFG), left posterior middle temporal cortex, and right postero-lateral occipital cortex. This study introduces a complicating dimension, insofar as it indicates that conventionalization results in a decreased processing load across both hemispheres rather than in a shift of activation from one hemisphere to another. In any case, a sophisticated account of conventional metaphor is where CMT attempts to stake its experimental claim.

**Embodiment and Metaphor**

Within the larger neo-empiricist trend outlined above, the relationship between CMT and embodied cognition has become more overtly theorized in recent years. Gibbs 2005 presents a detailed overview and discussion of embodiment in cognitive science generally. As discussed above, Lakoff in recent years has presented a neural theory of metaphor which is based precisely on the idea of an embodied processing of metaphor using neuro-physical circuits that involve the sensorimotor centers...
of the brain.⁵⁴ If conventional metaphors can be proven as embodied through imaging and psychological experiments, then they are not co-extensive with conventional literal language. The degree to which all language that pertains to space and movement, both figurative and metaphorical, is subject to embodied simulation is one of the more promising but controversial avenues of psychological and psycholinguistic research.⁵⁵ There are two axes of debate. First, the degree to which so-called primary metaphors arise from biology vs. culture. Second, the degree to which reasoning and language processing can be understood in terms of embodied knowledge vs. symbolic, abstract reasoning. As in most theoretical debates, there are orthodox positions in both controversies, with some advocating for a fully embodied account of primary metaphors, and others arguing for a cultural basis of metaphorical systems.⁵⁶ On the side of reasoning and language comprehension, some argue for pure embodiment, while others propose a fully amodal account of abstract reasoning and linguistic interpretation.⁵⁷ There is an increasingly robust pool of psychological evidence to suggest that we can process even the most conventional spatial metaphors in ways related to our sensorimotor systems. First, a necessary detour: the term “dead metaphor” is used somewhat casually in some treatments of metaphor in reference to deeply conventionalized metaphorical systems in language, but the very

---

⁵⁴ Lakoff 2012; 2014.

⁵⁵ For a review of the various theoretical approaches to embodiment, see Barsalou et al. 2008.

⁵⁶ Goatly 2007, 217–79 examines the relationship between embodied primary metaphors and culturally differentiated systems of metaphors. It is perhaps the best modern treatment of this question. His study of the conceptual systems of metaphor within culture is not incompatible with Derrida’s more abstract formulation, “Le mouvement de la métaorphisation (origine puis effacement de la métaphore, passage du sens propre sensible au sens propre spirituel à travers le détour des figures) n’est autre qu’un mouvement d’idéalisation (1976, 15).”

⁵⁷ A good point of entry into the amodal vs. embodiment controversy from a psychological and philosophical perspective is the debate between Weiskopf 2010b, Gibbs and Perlman 2010, and Weiskopf 2010a. Letheby 2012 engages with the amodal arguments of Adams 2010. A useful summary of the history of the debate from a social psychological perspective is Winkielman et al. 2015.
concept of a “dead metaphor” is not without its own theoretical complications. Goldstein, Arzouan, and Faust (2012) show using measures of N400 and LPC amplitudes that novel metaphors can be quickly conventionalized and that dead metaphors can be “revived” by exegesis in context. This speaks against characterizations such as that of White:

“That is a common phenomenon: that the use of a metaphor in the course of time generates a new sense for some of its words. Those new senses are precisely what cannot be meant by ‘metaphorical senses’, and the literal meaning they confer upon a sentence like this is precisely not what Davidson is appealing to when he appeals to the ‘ordinary meaning of the sentences they [sc. metaphors] comprise’. In the process of acquiring these new senses, the example has acquired a literal meaning, and simultaneously ceased to be a metaphor.”

One can think of an immediate complicating example to this sort of statement in the following form:

“I see what you mean.” would be, by most subjective accounts, non-metaphorical. However, immediately prefacing the statement with language that primes a metaphor (e.g. “My eyes are pretty tired, but I see what you mean.”) gives a much different interpretive outcome. White’s brute-force account of metaphor is reliant on a strict metaphorical/literal distinction, so conventionalized metaphors represent something to be explained away.

In returning to the experimental evidence, one finds that there are compelling results that indicate a degree of contextually conditioned spatial reasoning, and perhaps embodied simulation, for even the most conventionalized metaphorical statements. By asking people to make an initial grasping motion, researchers (Wilson and Gibbs 2007) found that the subjects more quickly understood the verbal metaphor “grasp the concept” than those who did not make the grasping motion. In a study

58 For more on the question of “dead metaphor,” see the extensive treatment in Müller 2008, as well as Allan 2009. See also Trim 2007, 141–51 for a diachronic account.

59 White 1996, 214
from 2002, Boroditsky and Ramscar presented students waiting in line with the fact that “Next Wednesday’s meeting has been moved forward two days.” They then asked to what day the meeting had been rescheduled. Students who were closer to the register were more likely to respond with “Friday.” They interpreted this to indicate that the forward movement experienced by those who were ahead in the line influenced their response of “Friday,” rather than of “Monday.” The researchers then had the same conversation with train passengers and found that the passengers who were near the end of their trips responded with “Friday” more frequently than those who were in the middle of their rides. They took the results as indicating that subconscious sensorimotor experience influences linguistic comprehension, and that the people who had moved more recently were influenced by their movement. However, one could also argue that these situations also might be particularly contextually primed for embodiment because of anxiety related to arrival or waiting. Those closer to the register, or those closer to their destination might be more cognitively preoccupied with the notion of arrival, and so more complex psychological states could be in play here. These experimental results could then also be consistent with the idea that strong embodiment is associated with conscious imagery, even if this imagery is peripherally related to linguistic stimuli. What this does seem to disprove is a theory of a completely abstract system of linguistic reasoning, in which case the position of the subjects should have absolutely no effect on their interpretation of language.

Gibbs, a strong proponent of partial embodiment, summarizes:

---

60 For a summary of additional evidence for embodiment, see Gibbs and Matlock 2008.

61 Meteyard et al. (2012) give a sober appraisal of the conclusions we can draw from research into embodiment along these lines.
“Cognitive neuroscience research also adds empirical support for the embodied basis of metaphoric understanding. One study employed fMRI to investigate people’s comprehension of literal (e.g. “Sam had a bad day.”) and metaphoric (e.g. “Sam had a rough day.”) sentence pairs (Lacey et al., 2012). Analysis of the fMRI data showed clear evidence of localized, domain-specific cortical areas during the processing of metaphor, but not literal paraphrases. Thus, some metaphor processing appears to activate selective sensory areas that are related to the source domain from which the metaphors originated (e.g. “rough” is related to touch or texture).”

One would imagine that these same sensory areas would activate in response to sentences such as “Sandpaper is rough.” In this vein, Gibbs admits that this experimental evidence does not only correspond to metaphorical language processing, but that certain experiments found somatotopic activation for both literal and metaphorical language (Boulenger et al. 2009), while others indicated that there is increased activity in the motor regions of the left anterior inferior parietal lobe and the cerebellum during processing of literal and metaphoric action sentences (Desai et al. 2011). The conclusions drawn from these studies are subject to more controversy than some pro-embodiment psychological analysis would indicate.

To choose a specific example, there does seem to be evidence for activation in the pre-motor cortex of listeners during language comprehension. The next question, of course, is what actually happens in the pre-motor cortex? According to the classical view of the pre-motor cortex, which states that it is essentially a mechanical encoder of bodily movement, this evidence could indicate a fully embodied simulation of the language in question. However, recent experimental data demonstrate that the pre-motor cortex is activated during complex cognitive processes including coding space, decoding spatial properties of objects, deliberation, and inductive reasoning.63 If the pre-motor cortex

---

62 Gibbs 2013, 48.

63 Lu et al. (2010), using fMRI data, conclude that there is significant pre-motor cortex activation with left lateralization during inductive reasoning, further speculating that the left pre-motor cortex is activated during inductive reasoning and the right pre-motor cortex during spatial information processing associated with arithmetic rules. They could not rule out
functions in abstract reasoning, then using pre-motor cortex activation as evidence for embodied simulation may be over-eager, unless one wants to claim that all spatial reasoning is embodied simulation. Hauk and Tschentscher (2013), in a review of the neuroscientific evidence for embodiment, recommend caution along these lines: first, we must define exactly what we mean by “embodiment;” second, even in studies focused on the processing of semantics of single words, the function of activated sensory-motor areas is unclear. They introduce two-pronged theoretical complexity: a gradient view of the degree of “embodiment” depending on both the type of language and the individual test subject. The essential point, which most neuroscientists will admit, is that the exact function and nature of the processes that happen in certain areas of the brain are the subject of ongoing experimental investigation. Conclusions about the processes that occur in regions of the brain where neurological imaging indicates activity are fundamentally speculative unless corroborated by other methods of investigation.

These contradictory findings are consistent with the more general point that “metaphor” is a cognitive process that comprises a diverse set of neural resources that vary according to context and to the characteristics of the individual. This indicates that the fully embodied and fully amodal accounts of reasoning and language processing are likely incorrect and that the reality lies somewhere in the middle. Along these lines, a recent theory of metaphor is the dynamic systems approach, which is an

---

the activation’s correspondence to short-term rule maintenance. Thura and Cisek (2014) outline the evidence for motor and pre-motor cortex involvement in decision making that involves physical activity.

Moreover, mirror neurons have been implicated both in one’s ability to recognize and simulate the actions others and in higher-order processes such as empathy. What additionally complicates this picture is that there is a relatively intense debate about the function of mirror neurons: do they trigger the action of imitation, or do they simply allow us to recognize actions that may or may not be imitated?

A similar conclusion is reached by Chatterjee (2010), who provides a thorough discussion and summary of the evidence from and experimental design of embodiment studies. Willems and Francken (2012) come to similar conclusions, while
interactive model that seeks to account for all synchronic and diachronic factors in metaphor comprehension and production. Among these factors are: evolutionary forces (bodily, cultural, cognitive, linguistic); present cultural conditions (beliefs, customary actions, ideologies); present social context (who, what, where, when); knowledge of language (lexical, grammatical, pragmatic); present bodily states (gestures, postures, eye gaze); present motivations and cognitions (needs and desires, communicative aims, interactional goals); immediate linguistic processing (production and reading of words, utterances, longer discourse); and neural processes (brain activities at both the local and global levels). Gibbs and Santa Cruz 2012 outlines how these various processes unfold temporally and organize them on a continuum from slowest to quickest.

Conclusions on Metaphor

The present work is not fundamentally concerned with advancing a new theory of metaphor, or of the cognitive processes behind metaphorical comprehension, but in terms of these theories’ significance for the analysis of Homeric poetry, a few remarks are in order. The way in which the preceding models have dealt with poetry is by invoking the concept of “poetic effects,” which generally speaking are the added semantic/cognitive effects present in novel and striking poetic metaphors. Essentially, the balance in Relevance Theory between maximizing relevance while minimizing emphasizing the under-acknowledged fact that experimental results such as Sato et al. 2008 and Papeo et al. 2009 indicate embodiment’s context and task-specific nature. Sakreida et al. (2013) using fMRI data conclude that concrete and abstract phrases trigger sensorimotor activity, but that abstract phrases show increased activation in areas of the brain associated with lexical and phonological processing. Winkielman et al. (2015) after reviewing evidence for embodiment that they characterize as convincing, still advocate for an approach to psychological phenomena that includes symbolic abstraction.

66 On this see Steen 2011, which critically engages with the “Contemporary Theory of Metaphor” as outlined in Lakoff 1993. For a more compressed account of a dynamic approach to metaphor, see Gibbs 2013.

67 Ibid. 51.
cognitive effort is selectively weakened when we “read closely” and attempt to extract the full nuances of poetic language. This of course also applies when we pay particular attention to a spoken utterance and attempt to analyze it. In modern scholarship, instances of “poetic effects” are primarily characterized as textual effects. However, the methodology employed is compatible with the analysis of orally composed and performed poetry.

From an etic or diachronic perspective, the use of a word in a “metaphorical” sense is purely a construction of an emic actor within the norms of the speech community. This construction interacts with the sort of unaware privileging of language-as-text mentioned above. Certain native speakers of American English in the 21st century will argue that phrases such as “to attack another’s viewpoint” are non-metaphorical. From an etic perspective this phrase is analyzable as metaphorical on the basis of both the verb and the noun, but from an emic perspective, it is entirely conventional and therefore can be interpreted as “literal.” What is certainly clear is that “metaphor” is not purely literary or ornamental; it is pervasive in all contexts of speech. Whether or not a word is used metaphorically or literally is a question of usage over time and speakers’ perception of individual instances of usage. In short, the notion of objective categories of figurative and literal meaning is fictional; these categories are created by subjective reactions to conventional or unconventional usage with concomitant neurological phenomena.

---

68 One might consider that the entire tradition of philosophy of language based on an in-depth analysis of truth-conditionality and referential correspondence is actually, from a pragmatic perspective, a poetic exercise in maximally extracting meaning in a decidedly atypical way. A philosopher in this tradition might respond that this process is simply a conscious, elaborated version of what happens subconsciously in non-philosophers, yet this notion seems to be contradicted by a large body of empirical evidence in both processing times and neurological imaging.

69 Contra Derrida’s (1967) notion of logocentrism, which itself has been polemically characterized as a misrepresentation of de Saussure’s CLG, see Harris 2001, 171–88.
The use of “convention” here is deliberately open-ended to imply the complexity of speaker-judgments, insofar as there are multiple dimensions of conventionality in language use that often are contextually conditioned and sociolinguistically specific. Research into metaphor using textual corpora has demonstrated that speakers’ intuitions about literal and figurative language and their conventional and unconventional use does not coincide with statistical data of actual usage (Deignan 2006). From a synchronic perspective then, metaphor may be a useful theoretical category only insofar as we are dealing with “metaphors” in which the gap between contextually conventional and unconventional usage is wide enough that emergent meaning occurs, as in the case of “Andrew is a bulldozer.” Metaphor as an intellectual process is the cognitive negotiation of the distance, and there are many ways to envision the mechanisms by which interpretation proceeds.

What we can say about novel “metaphorical” language is that it is any language which, within given parameters of pragmatic meaning, is unconventional enough to produce a complex set of cognitive activity in regions of the brain that are not typically activated in the processing of conventional language. These parameters of usage can correlate with a variety of cognitive processes, including the need to access encyclopedic knowledge, a concentration on imagistic vividness, or even embodied simulation (in the case of physical metaphors). The explication of the exact nature of these cognitive processes is ultimately a task for neuroscientists, but at this stage the limited neuroscientific imaging data supports the above account. The question is whether speakers/hearers are able accurately and systematically to describe language as metaphorical that triggers these cognitive processes. The notion of a theoretically objective lexical “metaphor” may be impossible due to the differing idiolects and cognitive characteristics of individuals. Therefore, a cognitive approach to lexical metaphor will operate on a model of synchronic consensus rather than including a rigid theoretical construct. What
the experimental evidence suggests, moreover, is that a metaphorical utterance appears to require more processing time or effort on the part of listeners or readers only in situations where there is little to no contextual support for the metaphor.\textsuperscript{70}

A nuanced understanding of these tendencies will still allow us to discuss “metaphorical” language with the caveat that this is not a completely definite category of language or meaning. Moreover, the attempt to categorize discretely the varieties of figurative language could itself be a misguided task. Even the famous dichotomy of metonymy and metaphor has been seriously challenged (Barnden 2010). In fact, what is at stake is one’s understanding of “categories” in general, and how human minds construct and evaluate categories. Do we envision a mental generation of strict, solid boundaries that allows the mind to construct and access concepts according to necessary and sufficient conditions, or is this notion of formal stability itself a construct? An early, extended attempt to challenge the “classical model” of categorization is Lakoff 1990, and recent empirical research in humans and some of our closest primate relatives has indicated rather strongly that the “classical model,” to use its own terms, is necessary but not sufficient in understanding how the mind categorizes.\textsuperscript{71} Primates, including humans, conceptualize tokens (or lexical concepts) in terms of a gradient or center-periphery prototypicality alongside individuated exemplars of those categories. These prototypical categories dynamically interact with and adjust according to data; they are not fixed. One can apply this dynamic, “fuzzy,” prototypicality to the various divisions in a traditional

\textsuperscript{70} A useful physical analogy between the variance in neural recruitment patterns in RH and LH in the processing of metaphorical and conventional language could be the interaction between the aerobic and anaerobic systems in physical exercise.

\textsuperscript{71} For a multiple systems approach to categorization that involves rules, prototypes and exemplars, see Smith et al. 2016.
dictionary entry (illustrated by different numbers and letters, usually) to show that these purportedly separate meanings often have an overlap.\(^2\) Perhaps more importantly for present purposes, one should probably conceptualize the categories of “literal” and “metaphorical” along dynamic, prototypical lines.

Therefore, a much more fruitful method of analysis would proceed from an understanding of the dynamic construction of “metaphorical” and “literal” prototypical categories according to a context-rich, multi-dimensional understanding of the comprehension and production of language. We will see below why it is unlikely on purely epistemological grounds that any theory of metaphor will be authoritative. However, what the experimental data indicate is that any appeal to a subconscious awareness of “literality” or propositional content as a prerequisite for an audience’s metaphorical interpretation is fundamentally misguided. The following chapter applies the methodology outlined above to Homeric poetry.

\(^2\) See Clarke 2010 for an application of prototype semantics to ancient Greek.
Chapter 1: Homeric Metaphor


A simulation of the emic perspective of metaphoricity in a Homeric context would make claims about what a given Iron Age Greek would have thought about language. For obvious reasons, we are in a better position to talk about metaphor in Homer from an etic perspective, but the confusion between these categories in scholarship on metaphor has been an unrecognized source of gaps within and miscommunication between interpretations of metaphorical language.73 We are all emic participants in the history of our language, yet without recognizing this, we conflate our emic status with synchronic analysis of language, and suppose that we can know ancient Greek or Latin as well as we know a modern language. This ignores the change that characterizes language over time, and vastly overestimates the maximum competency in ancient languages, which is fundamentally limited by the highly fragmentary corpora of these sources.

An optimistic account would say that we have 5% of all the texts produced in Greek between 700 BCE and 350 AD, and Vivian Nutton has estimated that Galen’s works compose roughly 10% of this total.74 Imagine an analogous situation for English: between Beowulf and now, choose 5% of the total corpus, and imagine that in several thousand years scholars try to understand emic conceptions of


74 Nutton 2004, 390 n.22.
English lexical meaning. It would be tough going. Moreover, a complex synchronic conception of language that takes into account sociolinguistic variety and idiolect is necessary for any comprehensive analysis of lexical and phrasal meaning. Modern sociolinguists and Heraclitus would be in agreement on this point: language is constantly resisting change, and slowly failing. Yet, more often than not, the diachronic perspective is elided. This is because metaphorical language studies are mostly made in English by speakers who do not take account of their emic perspectives.

As seen above, a major question in current scholarship on metaphor is whether metaphor is primarily linguistic or cognitive. The empirical evidence makes it likely that metaphor is cognitive, but this does not mean that every linguistic form of metaphor is produced by or elicits the same cognitive response in its speaker and hearer, respectively. The following approach will take the following as its basic methodological hypotheses: there is only (contextually specific) conventional and unconventional speech; words cause the cognitive construal of meaning; “literal” meaning does not exist; various types of what one might call “figurative” language are processed and interpreted in diverse regions of the brain; words have a variety of learned, inherited semantics that are constantly subject to change through use, and hearers or readers are constantly constructing meaning using verbal and, particularly in cases of performance, non-verbal context. In short, the term “metaphorical” should refer to cognitive processes, and not to decontextualized lexical meaning. Words are not metaphors; we can understand and use words in a given context by using the cognitive process of metaphor.

The meaning of words is the result of a dynamical process between the performer and the audience, writer and reader, speaker and hearer. Within this process, intended meaning can align with interpreted meaning, and it cannot; at least in everyday conversation, this misalignment is called a
misunderstanding. To what extent metaphor is “embodied” will resurface in the discussion of physical metaphors in Homeric poetry related to the body, but this dissertation is not primarily cognitive, psychological, or philosophical, so metaphor’s relationship to deep structures of thought, reasoning, and the mind will not be of fundamental concern during the case studies.

From a philosophical perspective, what should probably cause more concern in the study of metaphor is that almost all modern accounts of metaphorical language and thought use rather overt metaphors to express the relationship between the words or concepts in question. This begins with a physical metaphor in Aristotle, since metaphor itself is “a carrying over” or “transference.” The metaphor at the heart of the term “metaphor” turns back upon itself when Aristotle says (Poet. 1457b6–9): μεταφορά δὲ ἐστιν ὀνόματος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορὰ ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους ἐπὶ εἴδος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἴδους ἐπὶ τὸ γένος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἴδους ἐπὶ εἴδος ἢ κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον. Aristotle cannot escape the physical conceptualization of meaning-transference when he characterizes μεταφορά as ἐπιφορά, with only a variation in the prepositional first element of the compound. In modern scholarship, metaphors involve “mappings,” “frames” or “blendings.” This seems hopelessly recursive: we can only use metaphors to describe metaphor.75 A positive conclusion that one might make from this conundrum is that the cognitive processes that we call “metaphor” are so intrinsic to our consciousness that we are actually incapable of describing them. In philosophy of the mind, this is known as the problem of

75 As Ricoeur (1975, 364) says, “Le paradoxe est celui-ci: il n’y a pas de discours sur la métaphore qui ne se dise dans un réseau conceptuel lui-même engendré métaphoriquement.” The only way around this, to my mind, would be to claim that the notion of “transference” is actually occurring physically in the structures of the brain. That is, metaphor is neuronally encoded through synaptic transfer. Presumably the notion of metaphorical closure is what spurred the creation of Narayanan’s theory of metaphor which is adopted by Lakoff 2014. By positing an actual biological, cellular process that is unidirectional and “gated,” a theory of conceptual metaphor that is unidirectional can claim to reflect an empirical, biological reality. On recursivity of metaphor in the writings of Giambattista Vico and Hans Blumenberg, see Moyn 2000.
cognitive closure, wherein it is theorized that human minds are essentially incapable of solving certain problems. A variety of this stance, new mysterianism, has been popularized by Colin McGinn and specifically posits that humans cannot resolve the problem of their own consciousness.\textsuperscript{76} Regardless of whether one thinks the hard question of consciousness is answerable,\textsuperscript{77} if we are incapable of describing metaphor without metaphor, it might indicate that we are limited by our own cognitive capacity in describing that capacity. In this regard, the various theories of metaphor, instead of revealing the “reality” of metaphor, might instead demonstrate the individualized cognitive processes that their creators and proponents use in interpreting what they perceive as metaphorical language.

We saw above that a cognitive approach to metaphor works best when a scholar is aware of the difficulties in simulating the highly individualized and subjective evaluation of lexical “figurativeness,” and instead relies on the empirical observations of the unidirectional mappings such as MORE IS UP, SIMILARITY IS CLOSENESS et al., in which bodily states are abstracted into normative and emotional judgments. How do we apply this to Homer? The diachronic application of a cognitive theory of metaphor presupposes one thing, that cognitive processes associated with metaphor have not significantly changed, evolutionarily, over the last several thousand years. This is basically unprovable, because we do not have access to ancient brains, but seems to be a relatively safe assumption. Of course elements of cognition will be highly individualized due to a complex interaction of nature and nurture, but nobody really thinks that the Homeric Greeks were color-blind. It is evolutionarily unlikely that fundamental cognitive processes, in which metaphor appears to be implicated, have drastically changed

\textsuperscript{76} McGinn 1999.

\textsuperscript{77} I suspect that any explanation of consciousness will be metaphorical.
over the last 2000 years, despite the importance of inventions such as writing and computers in conditioning the way in which we access information and relate to the world around us.

Given the massive quantity of scholarship on meaning and metaphor, it will be surprising to everyone interested in poetry that there has been no large-scale work devoted to metaphor in Homeric poetry since Stanford’s 1936 book, “Greek Metaphor.” There are a few reasons why Homeric metaphor has been comparatively ignored. First, the extended simile is so remarkable and pervasive in Homeric poetry that it naturally has attracted a great deal of attention, and scholarly attention tends to accumulate in certain areas. Second, there is a misconception that simile and lexical metaphor (often in traditional treatments being conceptualized as a stylistic “trope”) represent the same phenomenon in different forms. Third, because simile includes overt words of comparison, it is easier for scholars to identify and discuss. Finally, there has been reticence in discussing metaphor in Homeric poetry on more conceptual grounds. Because the Iliad and Odyssey likely constitute our earliest complete works in alphabetic Greek, how can one determine “literal” or “figurative” usage of words when our earliest texts are poetic? To avoid this issue, scholars have used Homeric poetry as a baseline for standard poetic usage in Greek, and then discuss the role and development of metaphor in post-Homeric poets such as Pindar and Aeschylus.\footnote{Horn 2015; 2016.} The recent and forthcoming work of Fabian Horn is a welcome exception to this general neglect of Homeric metaphor.\footnote{See Silk 1974, on which it will suffice for now to note that the term “imagery,” under which the author subsumes metaphor, is in fact a metaphor. Nünlist 1998 is quite conceptually sophisticated, if somewhat taxonomic, in part because it accepts the theories of I.A. Richards.} Even in his sophisticated cognitive linguistic treatments of what are probably metaphors in Homeric language, one still finds a somewhat casual
equation of “etymological” and “literal” meaning, which the above discussion has hopefully shown is a simplification.\textsuperscript{80} Douglas Cairns has published several sophisticated analyses of ancient emotions (such as \textit{φρίκη} and \textit{αἰώς}) using Conceptual Metaphor Theory, in which he discusses the culturally situated lexicography of emotion words and ways in which one can still speak of commonalities between emotions of various cultures.\textsuperscript{81}

From a lexicographic perspective, there are two major problems with the way that lexical meaning in Homeric poetry is understood. First, the general conception of and dictionary entries for certain Homeric words reflect a post-Homeric bias. To use a rather mundane example, \textit{ἐλαύνω} in its most archaic and lexicographically “prototypical” sense in Homer means “to strike” and only then “to drive.” If this is surprising, it is because scholars often adopt Attic Greek meanings when reading Homeric Greek because they almost always learn Attic first. Case studies and specialized dictionaries such as \textit{Das Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos} (\textit{LfgrE}) have been instrumental in correcting this tendency, but there is still much to be done. This is due to the second problem, which is that traditional lexicographic methods are based on a hard literal-figurative distinction in meaning, so are not supported by empirical evidence. A recent corrective to this tendency is the important recent work of Michael Clarke (2010), which applies the theory of prototype semantics to ancient Greek \textit{τρέφω}, defining it as “achieving ful[1]ness through thickening or coagulation.”\textsuperscript{82} Prototype semantics, in the

\textsuperscript{80} For example, Horn (2016, 164) in referring to \textit{βυσσο-δεμαύω} writes, “the literal, ‘ordinary’ meaning can be ascertained etymologically through the basic senses of its two constituents, whose literal meanings are undisputed.” He using “literal” for what should be “prototypical,” referring to the prototypically embodied semantics of the constituents of the compound. Moreover, etymological semantics are always limited by the evidence available in the various cognate languages.

\textsuperscript{81} See Cairns 2008 (which is largely methodological); 2015; 2016a; 2016b.

\textsuperscript{82} Clarke 2010, 126–7.
most general terms, is grounded in empirical psychological testing and indicates that human beings conceptualize categories of meaning in terms of variable, adjustable gradients and not based on hard and fast logical rules. A given lexical concept is defined by its relative relationship to associated concepts, and the notion of a “category” or “boundary” separating these concepts is in fact a somewhat inaccurate conceptual metaphor. Clarke summarizes the fundamental problem facing anyone claiming mastery in Homeric Greek:

If I learnt enough Arabic or Chinese to order a meal in a restaurant, and if I went to Riyadh or Beijing and did so, I would have a better claim on that language than I have on Homer’s mother tongue after many years of daily engagement with his words. Yet, despite this simple fact, for centuries classical scholars have claimed an authoritative understanding of Ancient Greek and the ways that literary artists communicated meaning through its words. He goes on to outline in detail the methodological and conceptual errors that feature in important Greek lexica such as the *LSJ*, and highlights how these traditional lexicographic approaches are two-dimensional, omitting diachronic transformation of meaning. He concludes:

This is an exciting time in the study of historical semantics, exciting precisely because we have lost the sense of comfortable ownership which our forebears enjoyed as members of an artificially exalted educational elite. In the twenty-first century we come to a language like Greek as strangers and exiles, not as masters or connoisseurs, and the beginner student and the seasoned scholar stand as equals in the struggle to grasp the elusive meanings of its words.

Any judgment on emic “metaphoricity” in Homeric language, and indeed, in any ancient language will be fundamentally speculative because of the fragmentary nature of the evidence and because we are outsiders to the tradition. The judgement of metaphoricity is a product of highly individualized

---

83 See Margolis and Laurence 2014 on concepts and Thomasson 2016 on categories

84 Clarke 2010, 121.

85 Ibid. 132.
cognitive processes that depend on encyclopedic cultural knowledge that are only available to emic participants. A vast number of Greeks will have been exposed to Homer within the context of performance, and others will have known the Homeric poems primarily as texts. We, however, only have access to texts. We can try to simulate an emic experience of a performance context, or a textual ἀνάγνωσις, but we must be aware of what we are trying to do, and the fundamental epistemological limitations of such an approach. When it comes to conceptual metaphor, we are ultimately reliant on our etic, empirical conceptions of what is ontologically the case, i.e. there is nothing inherently “more” about “up,” or “similar” about “physical closeness,” but these metaphors are situated in our embodied experience of the world. We can recognize this and analyze metaphor from an etic standpoint, without necessarily making claims about how emic participants would have reacted to a given word.86

In this vein, there is a necessary word of caution on the conventionality of certain metaphors in Homeric poetry and their potential relationship to primary metaphors.87 Our corpus of early Greek poetry is so fragmentary that any conclusion about the conventionality of a usage will be contingent and probabilistic. Moreover, there is an overwhelming scholarly consensus that simile is more pervasive in Homeric poetry than metaphor. Is this idea a result of an accurate aesthetic observation, or an

---

86 One must be careful not to operate with an unrealistic distinction between the use of metaphorical language in prose and poetry. Poetry is typically a medium in which authors employ strikingly novel metaphors, but this is a difference of degree rather than kind. Prose is full of metaphor, and in some cases novel metaphors; one might think of a polemical op-ed in a newspaper or rhetorically charged political speech (Lakoff 1996).

87 In some ways, the study of metaphor in oral poetry is more theoretically compatible with the goals of the pragmatic theory of metaphor than a textually based study, insofar as the concern in pragmatics is the relationship between hearer/speaker and not between text and reader. Moreover, one might be able to shed some light on the history and status of the so-called “primary metaphors” that cognitive linguistics claims are universal and fundamental to thought. The goal then, as far as possible, is to analyze Homeric metaphor in the variety of contexts in which it would be encountered, and the effects that the different context would have on comprehension. How would a performer compose with the first-time listener in mind, a repeat listener, or a reader?
epistemological limitation? That is, does our lack of native-speaker intuition for Homeric Greek fundamentally hinder us from observing certain kinds metaphor, or is there actually a relative lack of metaphor compared to simile? The former is likely to be the case, and the very existence of the latter is worth consideration regardless of its truth.

There are still a few best practices when dealing with early metaphor. First, one must collect all relevant instances of the word(s) in question and compare their usages and meanings. Even this is not without some theoretical complexity. If one accepts the diachronic nature of oral poetry, it will inevitably be the case that various instantiations of a repeated metaphor (not to mention any word!) in Homer will have had equally varied degrees of synchronic conventional or unconventional usage depending on the antiquity or performance history of the word(s) involved. Language itself is always a mix of archaism and innovation, but a stylized tradition of oral poetry will contain further extremes between the most modern and most ancient phrases within a given composition. A phrase could trigger a metaphorical interpretation in a performance of ~700 BCE and be understood as entirely conventional and “literal” in 566 BCE, if it were to survive within the poem at all. Furthermore, even if the phrase were interpreted metaphorically in both performances, this interpretation could be vastly different based on both social context and language change. Any modern attempt at an ancient synchronic judgment on a given Homeric usage will, at best, be a very educated guess.

---

88 This includes looking at the evidence from an older dialect of Greek, Mycenaean, from which we may draw lexical evidence to compare with later Homeric usage. This is somewhat vitiated by the limited corpus of Mycenaean, but the Mycenaean evidence should still be addressed in all cases of alphabetic Greek lexicography. The advances in historical linguistics and lexical semantics over the past several decades allow us to establish excellent semantic approximations of older lexical meanings comparing the data of related languages and trends in semantic directionality across language families.
In advancing a diachronic account of metaphor, one must also take into account cross-linguistic patterns in language-change. Recent work in linguistics has attempted to expand the theory of diachrony by analyzing predictable “cycles” of linguistic change, which in morphosyntactic terms is usually referred as part of a wider phenomenon of “grammaticalization.” This term refers to constructions becoming less flexible in usage over time, largely (or according to some, always) in a unidirectional process. This is summarized in the famous aphorism of Talmy Givón (1971, 431) is “Today’s morphology is yesterday’s syntax.” Although one must be careful to take the context of usage into account when discussing grammaticalization, and to be aware that a strict division between phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics is generally undermined by notions of linguistic gradience between categories, one can still discuss patterns in semantic change. An example of such a diachronic change particularly relevant for this study is the following (Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994, 240):

\[ \text{MOVEMENT TOWARDS} \ x \ \text{or DESIRE FOR} \ x \ \rightarrow \ \text{INTENTION} \ \rightarrow \ \text{PURPOSE or FUTURITY} \]

In conceptual metaphorical terms, embodied movement becomes metaphorically abstracted to conceptualize and express intent, and eventually purpose or futurity. These meanings then can exist along one another synchronically in a given language, so English “to will” can express desire, yet the verb can also periphrastic future: “I will go.” and via contraction becomes a morphological marker of
futurity “I'll go.” 91 In analyzing metaphor by using ancient languages, one should check against the patterns observed in grammaticalization from the data of other, often more recent, languages. In terms of historical linguistic methodology, one might consider a metaphorical construal of a given word as potentially “inherited” alongside prototypical semantics.

A further complicating factor, specific to Homeric poetry, is the nature of the formulaic line and its interaction with novel and conventional metaphor. If a novel metaphor is repeated within a formula, does this accelerate the conventionalization of the metaphor, or are we dealing with an entirely different process? With a view to theoretical distinction, it may be prudent to separate for the purposes of this study the terms conventional and formulaic, wherein the former refers to convention within the larger construct of Greek language (Ricoeur’s “language”), and the latter to a conventional and analogical artistic form within the Homeric Kunstprache (Ricoeur’s “discourse”). 92 A reasonable objection to this distinction is that most of the evidence for Homeric metaphor will be taken from Homeric poetry, and that this is in fact not representative of Greek language outside this specific artistic medium. This is where recourse to Mycenaean and data from related ancient languages can provide evidence for, or disprove, a potentially wider form of linguistic conventionality of a given metaphor in Homeric poetry. Moreover, when one might suspect a given instance of metaphor in Homer, drawing comparison to metaphorical systems in cognate poetic traditions will allow at the least

91 The etymology of *welh₁ “to desire” is controversial, yet my suspicion is that from a prototype-semantic approach, it is connected with *wel “to turn.” In a future project, I hope to reconcile the various roots listed under LIV 3, 674–9.

92 The difference between this distinction and that of de Saussure’s abstract langue and usage-based parole will be that the parole in this case is theorized as a communal construct which has an extremely marked sociolinguistic importance and which ultimately influences the langue. To extend his metaphor of a chess match, the innovatory parole of Homeric language can actually change the rules of the game of langue.
for a comparative literary analysis of metaphorical usage and at the most for a claim that the metaphorical systems themselves date to a common source of oral poetry. If the latter case can be convincingly demonstrated, as I think it can in certain cases, this *might* suggest a conventional metaphor in Homeric Greek.

Is metaphor really less prevalent than simile in Homeric poetry? It is certainly less obvious, and perhaps this is the more important point. All of what has been mentioned above about the effects that metaphor has on language change and the effects that language change has on metaphor applies much less to simile because of the overt word of comparison. As we will see in the third chapter, the extended Homeric simile, especially, has very little risk of becoming semantically opaque due to the wear and tear of time. In the next chapter, I will outline how to apply this methodology to ἔπεα πτερόντα, “winged words.”
Chapter 2: When Words Fall Short - ΕΠΕΑ ΠΤΕΡΟΕΝΤΑ

“Image is what I saw; metaphor is when my tongue caught fire.”

– Charles Simic, from “Narrative of the Image: A Correspondence.”

The previous chapter outlined the difficulties of reconstructing an emic judgement of metaphoricity and the relationship of this emic judgement to the synchronic analysis of Homeric metaphor. The conclusion was that any reconstruction of emic lexical meaning in the Homeric poems, even with the testimony of the scholia, is essentially hypothetical. This is not to say that one cannot argue for a phrase’s unconventionality and potentially emic “metaphoricity” with some probability, but this requires a compelling argument based on evidence, not casual importations of our modern judgements of metaphor onto ancient Greek speakers. Moreover, we can only make claims of etic metaphoricity by using close lexical study of synchronic data and then developing a diachronic model. A diachronic account of a phrase is also characterized by epistemological difficulties, insofar as the evidence that allows one to reconstruct a model of the phrase that evolves throughout time is fundamentally fragmentary. An epistemological advantage of the diachronic model is that, if applied judiciously, it makes no strong claim about emic lexical meaning. Likewise, a synchronic, etic account

93 I am cautious when it comes to the use of the scholia, and this puts me more in line with Lynn-George 1982 contra Griffin 1980. Whenever modern scholars do use the scholia, for example, to assist us with the meaning of a phrase, this is an instance of a scholarly (etic), synchronic construction of lexical meaning by using the record of an emic participant (the scholiast) in the tradition. Now this also needs to be nuanced, since the scholiasts were emic participants in the tradition of Homeric scholarship, but etic to the tradition of formulaic composition, which was a rule-governed system that was in all likelihood transmitted entirely through oral tradition. The reality of the situation is this: if Homeric poetry had been easily understandable to Hellenistic Greeks, there would have been no need for an elaborate scholarly tradition. Therefore, the Alexandrians were outsiders, as we are, and the difference is one of degree rather than kind. This also does not allow one to extend, without significant external evidence, the judgment of the scholiast to anything outside of its synchronic moment, which itself can be debatable depending on the purported age of the entry. The scholia do not tell us the objectively “right” or “wrong” meaning of anything; they tell us what a Hellenistic-era scholar thought something meant, which is an important piece of evidence if we treat it with due caution. Inevitably, I will fail in this in the view of some.
of lexical meaning should make no primary claims about what speakers thought something meant, but how the word is used according to etic theoretical models. I will attempt to enact this methodology by examining the famous ἔπεα πτερόεντα “winged words.”94 The confusion regarding the history and meaning of this phrase results from two related issues: the confusion of emic and etic perspectives on metaphor, and the denial of polysemy even in the face of overwhelming evidence for it.

Appearing roughly 124 times, varying slightly by edition, the phrase ἔπεα πτερόεντα appears commonly in the formula [ἕπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδ-] P2, which is deeply embedded in Homeric language.95 The phonological nature of the noun phrase reveals its antiquity. Reconstructable on the basis of historical linguistics and confirmed by internal metrical evidence, the phrase at an earlier point in the Greek language would have been ἕπεα πτερόεντα.96 The initial digamma of (ϝ) ἕπεα optionally makes metrical position and blocks hiatus, but the possessive adjective πτερό(ϝ)_entα contains another digamma that necessarily preserves the hiatus between omicron and epsilon in all of its occurrences. This indicates that the phrase became formulaic in the way that we find it in our Homeric texts while the memory of intervocalic digamma was still strong enough to prevent πτερό(ϝ)_entα from ever contracting and scanning as u – u (= πτερόντα* < πτερόεντα). The prehistoric loss of digamma in Attic-Ionic, between the first and second rounds of reversion, and its absence from our earliest 8th century Attic and Ionic inscriptions mean that the phonology of this phrase almost certainly belongs to, at the

---

94 For a thorough treatment of the various approaches to the related ἀπτερός µῦθος, see Reece 2009, 320–34.

95 Roughly 115 times in the Iliad and Odyssey. Apthorp 1999, following Bolling 1922, characterizes some instances of the phrase as interpolations. Pu/P2 indicating before or after the penthemimeral caesura, T1/T2 indicating before or after the trochaic caesura, following Hoekstra 1965. For more detailed lists of the formulaic evidence, see Foley 1990, 129–37; Letoublon 1999, 327–32; Reece 2009, 315–16.

96 The initial sequence πρ- of προσηύδ- never makes position, and this is alleged as evidence for an earlier *ποτάωδα by West 1987, 22. De Decker 2015, 18–38 argues that this verb is originally athematic and is evidence for an Aeolic phase.
latest, ~725 BCE. The phonology of the words, combined with their frequent attestation, allows one to treat the phrase as one of the most deeply embedded in the Homeric system of formulaics. There have been debates over the last 2500 years or so regarding the meaning of the phrase, many of which suffer from the same misapprehension, that there can be only one meaning. A more productive question is, what is the history of the phrase’s meaning?

This may seem like a strange question to many native Anglophones, who were raised on the translation of “winged words.” Whether encountering Homer first through a translation, or in an introductory class to Homeric Greek, many English-speaking Classicists are culturally conditioned to translate ἔπεα πτερόντα as “winged words” as if by reflex. The general implication, if I may extrapolate from my individual knowledge of English, is that this metaphorical phrase describes words as animate beings that fly, namely birds. However, there has been a debate, essentially unceasing, since the mid-19th century about whether “winged” is even the right adjective, or if these words are rather “feathered.” If they are “feathered words,” this leads to the possibility that the words are not necessarily conceived of only as animate, but as any entity which has feathers, including an arrow. This latter interpretation, in Anglophone scholarship, has in several cases been relegated to dismissive footnotes and asides. At least part of the question hinges on the translation of πτερόν, since morphologically

---

97 The use of geflügeltes Wort in German is a nice example of idiomatic transformation. Based on the 1864 work by Georg Büchmann, Geflügelte Worte. Der Citatenschatz des deutschen Volkes, this phrase can now refer to an orally transmitted aphorism that has made its way into popular discourse. To my knowledge, Büchmann’s use of the phrase is based on the German translation of Homeric ἔπεα πτερόντα found in the work of Johann Heinrich Voß (Odyssey 1781, Iliad 1793). The Basel commentary, preferring the arrow interpretation (see below), ad ll. 1.201 states, “Die mit Voß eingebürgerte Übersetzung ‘geflügelte’ Worte ist irreführend, weil sie an ‘Vogel’ denken läßt.”

98 E.g. Fletcher 2008, 85 n.29 “this rather flaccid interpretation”; Vivante 1975, 1 n.2, “with less taste, from archery...” etc. Stanford 1936, 137 n.1 which attempts to argue against Thomson 1936’s arrow interpretation is perplexing, and seems to assume that the term “feathered” does not naturally include the category of “winged.”
πτερόεις is a possessive adjective < "p(t)ero-w-ent-s, “possessing a quantity of πτερόν.”\textsuperscript{99} Put simply, πτερόεις is a standard adjective modifying arrows in Homeric poetry:

1) ἐκ δ' ἔλεγ' ἰδν / ἀβιβήτα πτερόεντα μελαινέων ἔμετ' ὀδύναων.\textsuperscript{100} (I.I. 4.117–18)
2) Πάνδαρε ποῦ τοι τὸδὸν ἰδὲ πτερόεντες διόταλ (I.I. 5.171–2)
3) ἱοὶ τε πτερόεντες ἀπὸ νευρήτη βορόντες (I.I. 16.773)
4) ἵστατ' Ἀπόλλων Φοῖβος ἔχων ἴα πτερόεντα (I.I. 20.68)

Given this evidence, and comparative Indo-European evidence, to be discussed further below, Durante 1958/68, argued for the metaphor of ἔπεα πτερόεντα as referring to “feathered words” in the form of arrows. The lexicographer, J.N. O’Sullivan, who composed the entry of πτερόεις in the LfgrE is not sympathetic.\textsuperscript{101} After the providing definitions “feathered (1a), winged (1b)” we come to:

“2. Metaph[or] of ἔπεα; dispute on whether metaph[or] from winged birds or feathered arrows and on exact point of comp[arison], (e.g. speed, accuracy); for disc[ussion] see L; n[ote] esp[ecially] that πτερόν (so too πτέρυξ) usu[ally] means ‘wing’, not ‘feather’ and that prim[ary], natural assoc[iation] of πτερά is w[ith] birds, not arrows (sec[ondary], artificial, and hardly so strong that ‘feathered’ would immediately suggest ‘like an arrow’); the ἔπεα πτ. of speeches so introd[uced] are in any case ‘spoken words’.”

O’Sullivan here takes an aggressive stance against Latacz 1968, whose discussion of the psychological understanding of words as arrows he calls, later in the entry “tendentious fancy.” This denial that ἔπεα πτερόεντα could have any strong connotation of arrows comes just after entry 1., in which πτερόεις is shown to be a standard adjective modifying arrows in Homeric poetry, and not birds. Etymologically,

\textsuperscript{99} The etymology of πτερόν to be discussed below.

\textsuperscript{100} Athetized by Aristarchus on the basis of the perceived semantic oddity of ἔμετ' ὀδύναων.

\textsuperscript{101} As I argued in the previous chapter, traditional lexicography is based on problematic assumptions about word-meaning. It mistakenly operates from the conception of literal/metaphorical as representing two different types of word-meaning that are objective, instead of emically constructed categories that are highly individualized and subjective. On the basis of this fundamental (mis-)understanding, dictionary entries are then organized according to hierarchical entries of meaning according to these definitions. It also traditionally ignores polysemy, which is simply a fact of language in context. There are traditional lexicographers who have a nuanced enough understanding of language that they implicitly recognize and respond to these issues. This is not because of their lexicographic training, but despite it.
πτερόν is from the root *pet-* “to move through the air” \(\rightarrow\) “fall/fly,” (Cf. Gk. πέτωμαι, πίπτω L. peto) and is likely a substantivized adjective from *pt-er-o- meaning “thing that flies,” which, in terms of conceptual associations (à la prototypical theories of semantics) easily gives “feather” and “wing.”

How could this word, or any transparent derivative associated with it, not connote both birds and arrows? It is a given that our ability to reconstruct the encyclopedic knowledge of emic speakers, and the subsequent “strength” of the various shades of meaning that they could cognitively construe will be hampered by the fragmentary evidence and our status as outsiders. However, O’Sullivan’s method here is highly simulational of an emic participant in theoretically fraught ways. Homeric poetry itself does not talk much about archery, seen largely as dishonorable, but this does not allow one to extrapolate from this onto the general encyclopedic knowledge of an archaic Greek poet or audience member about what the “primary” associations of πτερόν/πτερά would have been. So much for the second point.

Back to the first point. If we claim that πτερόν primarily meant “wing,” how could we possibly rule out the ubiquitous metonymic processes of pars pro toto (“He’s just a pretty face”), or in the case of πτερά, totum pro parte (“America” for the “United States of America”). These are not exotic cognitive-linguistic phenomena; they are quotidian. O’Sullivan relies on the meaning of πτερόν as “wing” to try to argue that πτερόντα would not have “primary, natural associations” of archery. This seems to be special pleading, and is based on an empirically incorrect understanding of literal/metaphorical meaning, but let us examine the evidence in detail. Cited in favor of πτερά being “wings” and not “feathers” are:

1) “...ἀλλ’ οἶνων / ὄμησταί ἔρνουσι, περὶ πτερά πυκνὰ βαλόντες (Il. 11.453–4)
‘... but the birds that eat raw flesh will drag you, having thrown their close-set πτερά around you’.

2) τῶ δὲ ἐντε πτερά γίνετ’, ἀειρε δὲ ποιμένα λαῶν. (Il. 19.386) And for [Achilles] the armor became just like πτερά, and it lifted the shepherd of the host.

3) αὐχέν’ ἀπεκρέμασεν, σὺν δὲ πτερά πυκνά λίασθεν. (Il. 23.879) [The dove] drooped its neck, and its close-set πτερά together parted.

4) ...τόσσ’ ἄρα τοῦ ἑκάτερθεν ἐσαν πτερά. (Il. 24.319) ...so far were the πτερά [of the eagle] from either side.

5) ἐνθ’ ἐπιδινηθέντε τιναξάσθην πτερὰ (Od. 2.151) There having whirled around they shook their close-set πτερά.

6) ἰχθυὸς ἀγρώσσων πυκνὰ πτερὰ δεῦται ἀληθ. (Od. 5.53) [An eagle] catching fish dips its close-set πτερὰ in the sea.

7) τῶν νέων ὦκειαι ὡς εὶ πτεράν ἢ νύμα. (Od. 7.36) Their ships were swift, as if a πτερόν or a thought.

8) οὐδ’ εὔφρε’ ἑρετμά, τὰ τε πτερὰ νησιὶ πέλοντα. (Od. 11.125 = 23.272) Nor the well-fitted oars, which are πτερά for ships.

Taking many of these examples of πτερά as “wings” makes perfect sense in English, but is there evidence that ancient Greeks made a categorical distinction between a group of feathers and a wing? A completely transparent case of πτερά being “feathers” is: ...ἐν δὲ πόδεσι τύλλε πέλειαν ἵχων, κατὰ δὲ πτερὰ χεύειν ἤφαξ (Od. 15.526–7) “... and holding a dove in its talons it plucked it, and was shedding feathers to the ground.” This really cannot indicate “wings” to the exclusion of “feathers.” Example 6) above could indicate both. The use of the neuter plural is fundamentally ambiguous, heightened by the status of this morphological category as an old collective. In fact, the only way to prove that archaic Greeks only thought πτερά meant “wings” and not “feathers,” would be if the forms were in the dual,

102 One additional problem with LfgrE is that the entries are often at odds with one another. On the one hand, O’Sullivan might have been advised to study the LfgrE’s entry on πυκνός by Rudolf Führer, which shows that it means “dicht, sowohl räuml. dicht nebeneinander,” cf. πυκνός λίθοισιν Il. 16.212; ὄδόντες πυκνοί Od. 12.92. This speaks to the potential polysemy of πτερὰ πυκνά as “thick wings” or “close-set feathers.” Führer’s entry translates πτερά πυκνά in example 3) above as “dicktgefiederten Flügel sackten zus[ammen],” which seems to want to have it both ways by translating “thick-feathered wings,” which if true, is closer to the reality of the situation. The verb however, “zusammensacken” in my view is incorrect. W. Beck in his entry on λιάζομαι translates “but her wings fluttered quickly away,” correctly observing, at least, that λιάζομαι is best translated as something like “(de)part.”

103 See above note.

104 Potentially an accusative of respect (vel sim.); this verb is difficult.
πτερώ*, which could only mean “two wings” if referring to the flight of a bird. It seems that πτερά in Homeric Greek was polysemous, meaning both “feathers” and “wings.” Example 7 is the strongest for O’Sullivan’s claim that πτερόν in the singular means “wing”; one could imagine that a wing is fast, but a feather is not. The issue is that this is the only attestation of πτερόν in the singular in early epic, and his analysis ignores the derivational linguistic evidence: de-nominative πτερόω in classical Greek means to “give x wings and/or feathers,” and the de-verbative noun πτέρωμα transparently means “arrow” in a passage that plays off of the polysemy:

ΑΧΙΛΛ. ἀ(ξ)ίδε ἐστὶ μόθων τῶν Διβυστικῶν λόγος,
πληγέντα ἄτρακτῳ τοξικῷ τὸν αἰετόν
εἶπεν ἰδόντα μηχανήν πτερώματος.
“τάδ’ οὐχ ὑπ’ ἀλλῶν, ἀλλὰ τοῖς αὐτῶν πτεροῖς
ἂν ισικόμε<ξ>θα”.
Aesch. Μυρμ. Fr. 139

Achilles: Thus is a tale from the Libyan proverbs, the eagle, struck by the spindle of the bow (i.e. an arrow), after seeing the device of the ‘feathered one’ (i.e. the arrow), said: “So, not by the power of others, but by our own feathers/wings are we caught (i.e. perish).”

---

105 One wonders if this just means “a flyer” → “bird.”

106 Omicron contract verbs are later interpreted as de-adjectival/factitive, cf. νέος, νέω as the older pair, as against later νέος, νέω, generalized from the second step of the following substantivization process becoming synchronically opaque, ἵπρος “holy” (→ ἵπρον “holy thing”) → ἵπρω “to consecrate” → ἵφωμα “offering,” see Rau (frhc).
The notion here clearly is that a feathers from the wings of a bird have been used to make the fatal arrow, but one could argue that totum pro parte is in play.\textsuperscript{107} Aristophanes in turn riffs off of this passage in the \textit{Birds} in a way that seems to allow only πτερά as “feathers”:\textsuperscript{108}

'Ευελπίδης: ἐπὶ τῷ γελάς;

Πισθέταιρος: ἐπὶ τοῖς σοὶς ὁκυπτέροις.

οἴσθ᾽ ὁ μάλιστ᾽ ἰδικας ἐπτερωμένος;

εἰς εὐτέλειαν χηνὶ συγγεγραμμένῳ.

'Ευελπίδης: σὺ δὲ κοψίχῳ γε σκάφιον ἀποτετιμένῳ.

Πισθέταιρος: ταυτὶ μὲν ἡκάσμεσθα κατὰ τὸν Αἰσχύλον:

τάδ᾽ οὖν ὑπ᾽ ἄλλων ἄλλα τοῖς αὐτῶν πτερῶις.

Aristoph. \textit{Birds} 802–8

Euelpides: What are you laughing at?

Pisthethaerus: At your swift wings/feathers, you know what you most resemble, winged/feathered?

You’re like a goose painted on the cheap.

Euelpides: And you look like a blackbird plucked as though there’s a bowl on your head. We’re the basis of these comparisons, according to Aeschylus:

“Not by the power of others, but by our own feathers.”

In this case, the πτερά are referring specifically to the feathers on the top of Pisthethaerus’ head, corresponding to his hair; it seems here that feathers, and not wings, are the only interpretive option.

The empirical reality is that Greek up until the 5\textsuperscript{th} century uses the same word, πτερά for both “wings” and “feathers,” and that translating πτερός as “feathered” is potentially more accurate because it

\textsuperscript{107} The bizarre episode in Apollonius’ \textit{Argonautica} where birds shoot their feathers at the Argonauts like arrows (\textit{Arg.} 2.1033) must be related to this traditional discourse.

\textsuperscript{108} For extensive commentary on this passage, see Dunbar 1998, 329–30.
replicates, if somewhat more awkwardly, this polysemy. In short, I think that ἔπεα πτερόεντα could have been understood in, for example, the 6th century BCE as variously referring to words as arrows or words as birds, and there is in fact good evidence for both cases. The antiquity of the evidence for words as arrows, I will argue, is greater and can be understood diachronically, but the synchronic data for words as birds in archaic Greek culture is robust. Dell’oro (2007) concludes that in Homeric poetry πτερόες meant “feathered” and referred to arrows, but in later Greek this was lost and interpreted as referring to “winged” animals. Although I do not agree with this stratified model, the diachronic approach is commendable. She is appropriately skeptical of the reconstruction of the phrase’s “origin,” but I think there is still something interesting to be said about its history.

In terms of its deeper derivational history, Greek *pt-ero- seems to be a bit of an outlier, since it has zero-grade of the root. Full-grade vocalism *pet-r- is found in Skt. pátra- (n.) “wing, feather,” Lat. acci-piter, -tris “hawk,” OHG fedara <*pet-r-eh2, ON fjǫðr (f.) “feather.” Hittite pattar, -anaš (n.) “ibid.” represents an old -r/-n heteroclite, which is probably the derivational basis of the various forms in the daughter languages. The n-stem is found in L. penna < *pet-n-eh2, cf. OIr. én “bird” (< *pet-n-ó-). Greek πτηνός, ἴ, ὧν, Dor. πτανός, ἄ, ὧν, ostensibly showing *pteh2–no-, is probably due to tertiary

109 See Dell’oro 2007, 29–33 for examples of πτερόες supposedly meaning “winged” and not “feathered” in post-Homeric Greek. I have no problem with polysemy of the adjective, but find this hard and fast distinction implausible.

110 Dell’oro 2007, 35 n.35, “Le attestazioni e lo stadio linguistico che possiamo analizzare, nel quale compare un sintagma già ben cristallizzato in una formula, non consentono, a nostro avviso, di ricostruire con maggiore precisione l’origine della metafora, che deve essere molto antica.”

111 Cf. Alc. 23.49 ὑποπτηρίδιων ἄνειρων.

112 The attestation of Hittite pittar/pittanas make the reconstruction of the vocalism difficult, since the root vocalism could be *pot/pet/p. See Puhvel sv. pittar for the various options. Presumably the accent-ablaut could be proterokinetic (pótH-r / *ptH-én or *pétH(ó)r / *petH-én), acrostatic (*pétHr or pótHr / *pétHn), or amphikinetic (*pt-ór “collection of feathers” → “wing”). On acrostatic r/n stems, see Schindler 1975, 10; Rau 2009, 74.
aorist formations (such as ἔπτη [Hes. Op. 98], analogically built from early, but secondary alaphathematic ἔπτατο, the primary form of which with short thematic vowel is found in ἐπιπέσθαι [Il. 4.126]).

It is commonly alleged (e.g. in Beekes sv. πτερόν and Puhvel sv. parta[i]) that Hittite parta(i)- “wing, feather,” OCS pariti “fly,” pero “feather,” Skt. parna “feather, wing,” Av. parəna “ibid.,” and TB paruwa (pl.) “feathers” indicate a separate root *(s)per, given Lith. sparnas (m.) “wing.” The Slavic forms such as OCS pero, which is a thematic neuter, is another source of complexity. Höfler (2017, 18) points out this thematic neuter is a reinterpretation of the s-stem *peros (n.) conditioned by the homophonous nominative and accusative singular in -o of both stem classes. He sets up the root as *(s)perhx, arguing for a final laryngeal on the basis of the OCS verbal form, and OIr. raith and Gaul. ratis “fern” < *(s)prhx-ti. Rick Derksen (1996, 78–9) similarly sets up a laryngeal-final root on the basis of the Celtic evidence and Lith. papártis and Latv. papārde “fern.” Stefan Höfler goes on to posit neuter s-stem *(s)perhx-(o)s “feather, wing,” which will account for Polabian nom.acc pl. perese, along with the modern Slavic thematic neuters. This s-stem allows him to account for Latin parra “bird (of ill-omened cry)” < *(s)parsā < (s)parasā < *(s)přhx-s-eh2 < (s)přhx-s-ó, confirmed by Umbr. parfa-

---

113 See Hackstein 2002, 140–2. For a discussion of *pet(h1) “fall” as opposed to *pet(h2) “fly” in Homeric Greek (following LIV ssv.) see García Ramón 2007, 199–200. I see no real reason to posit these as separate roots.

114 Following Vaillant 1958, 231–47, but see now Olander 2012.

115 See Koch 1990, 430–2.


“bird used in ritual contexts” < parVsā. This also potentially accounts for the Hesychian gloss of σπαράσιον (diminutive < *sparasā) “bird resembling a sparrow.” This account seems correct, but also somewhat too tidy. Firstly, it projects the root back to the proto-language based on Italo-Celtic and Balto-Slavic; one would want a conspicuously separate third branch. Secondly, there are additional forms that need accounting for, such as Cornishfrau, Bret. frao “crow” < *sprawa < *spreh2-u- (?), OPr. spurulis “sparrow” alongside the Hesychian glosses περγούλον· ἄρνιθαριον ἄγριον “small field bird,” Λάκωνες “Laconians” and σπέργολος· ἄρνιθαριον ἄγριον < *(s)per-. The Germanic forms are non-probative in terms of the final laryngeal, OE spearwa (> MEng. sparrow), ON spórr, OHG sparo, MGer. Sperling, Gothic sparwa, all deriving from Proto-Germanic *spar(H)wan < PIE *spar(H)-wo- < PIE *sper(H). Even assuming a laryngeal in the Germanic forms, we would have *(s)perH as a root common to Italo-Celtic, Balto-Slavic, and Germanic. The latter two branches are commonly assumed to comprise a Sprachbund, making the case only slightly stronger for the root *(s)perH in the proto-language. Presumably these forms have something to do with Gk. ψάρ/ψήρ “starling,” attested already in the Iliad (II. 16.583, 17.755), alongside Hesych. ψάρις· γένος στρουθοῦ. These are strange forms, ostensibly showing if inherited, *pseh2r or (less likely) *psRh2 > psr > (metathesized) psār. One could explain the Germanic and Balto-Slavic forms as resulting from an early metathesis ps- > sp-, but this would give a great deal of weight to these relatively marginal Greek words. Given that the root is

---


119 de Vaan s.v. parra.

120 A character in Aristophanes’ Birds, Σπαργύλος the barber, is compared to a κειρύλος, which seems to be an etymological pun (resembling κεῖρω “to cut”) on κηρύλος, a sea-bird (“razor-bill[?]”). Another word for barber, κουρεύς, is glossed by Hesychius as a bird that makes a noise like a dresser’s knife (δρόμης πουές, ἀπὸ τοῦ φθινόγειος ἱμερίες ἡχος γαφίκου μαχαιρίου).

121 Kroonen 2013 s.v. *sparwa(n) advocates for the metathesis of *ps- to PGm. *sp-.
already extended in *(s)perg-, one might see the root *(s)perH- as another extension, potentially resulting from the addition of the -h2 collective suffix. All of the nouns above are developments from a prototype semantic of “the thing having feathers,” and “feathers” would have been represented naturally by the old collective nominal formation *(s)per-h2. Building a possessive thematic derivative to this would result in *(s)per-h2 → **(s)per-h2–o- “having feathers” → **(s)pér-h2–o “bird,” with consequent re-interpretation of the root as *sperh2. The underlying root then, would still be (s)per, but with two potential extensions, *(s)perg and *(s)perh2,122 although the former does not contain a recognizable suffix. The -g is obscure, but one might note by the way of comparison that there are -g extensions cross-linguistically in avian words, such as RV pataṃga “flier” < *pet-en-g-o, and Gk. πτερύξ “wing” < *pt-er-u-g-.123

However, even the reconstruction of a separate root *(s)per ignores that in Slavic, Hittite, and Tocharian, all initial stop clusters are reduced; therefore what would have been the zero-grade of *pet- in Indo-European, #pt-, would automatically reduce, in all likelihood, to #p-. What look like two separate roots were in early Indo-European the same root, *pet. The zero-grade of this root *pt- was phonotactically aberrant in many branches, and in effect, *pt-er- became *(s)per-. Therefore, OCS pero < *pter-o-, Skt. parṇā, Av. parṇa < *pter-no-, TB paruwa < *pter-weh2. This is all to say that arrows, modified by deverbal adjectives from the root *pet- “to fly,” are likely a feature of the proto-language:

---

122 Outside of the Hesychian gloss, there is no evidence outside of Balto-Slavic and Germanic for any initial s- in this root; the Hesychian gloss is complicated, insofar as it could be due to language-contact.

123 On the connection between words for “wing” and words for “horn,” see Nussbaum 1986, 13–14.
“feathered/winged arrows” are Indo-European. While πτερός as a denominative possessive adjective is clearly an inner-Greek development, it participates, at some remove, in this wider system.

A few examples from an early Indic tradition should demonstrate the semantic similarities between Greek πτερόν and Skt. पर्ण. In a Rigvedic hymn that features a series of riddles describing implements of war, the eleventh verse describes an arrow:124

suparṇāṃ vaste mrgó asyā dánto / a
góbhīḥ sāmnaddhā prāśūta / b
yātrā nárah sám ca vi ca drávanti / c
tátrāsmābhyam īṣavaḥ sárma yaṃsan /d
RV 6.75.11

She wears the fine-feathered (eagle); a wild deer is her tooth. Lashed together with cows, she flies when propelled forth. Where men clash and separate, there will our arrows provide shelter for us.

The arrow is described as wearing suparṇāṃ, which is plausibly interpreted as a riddling compound form referring to an eagle, the rough Greek equivalent of ἐὖπτερος (Soph. OT 175). The riddle only works, like Aeschylus’ riddle in the Myrmidons, if the “feather” word applies well to both arrows and birds.125 In the hymn describing the baby Indra who slays the boar Emuṣa, which may remind one of Hercules and the serpents, or the exploits of baby Hermes in his Homeric hymn, we find another compound modifying an arrow, in this case, īṣu, cognate with Greek ἰός:

śatābradhna īṣu táva / a
saḥāsrarpana ēka īt / b
yām indra cakṛṣé yújam / c
RV 8.77.7


125 For an interaction between an arrow and a bird, see RV IV.27.
Your arrow with a hundred ruddy glints
and a thousand feathers was the single one
that you made into your yokemate, o Indra.

The divine arrow that Indra uses to slay the boar has a thousand points and a thousand feathers. The enigmatic final verse of the funeral hymn X.18 likewise describes the feather of an arrow:

pratīcī̥́ne mḁ̄́m áhani / a
īṣvāḥ parpām īva’dadhuḥ / b
pratīcīṁ jagrabhā vācām / c
āśvaṁ raśanāyā yathā / d
RV X.18.14

On the day facing me [=today] they have set (him=dead man) down like a feather from an arrow.
The speech facing me I have grasped, like a horse by its halter.

The poet here is in a vividly embodied scenario, with the day “facing the speaker” as reflecting its temporal immediacy; the ritualists have buried a man, like the feather from an arrow. This is enigmatic, but the word here again is parṇā.

I discussed above how the etic scholarly simulation of emic meaning was mistaken in the case of πτερόν and πτερόεις. The methodology used was the classic lexicographical model, but there has been another challenge to the meaning of ἔπεα πτερόεντα on the basis of oral-formulaic theory. In a 1933 article, Milman Parry argued that ἔπεα πτερόεντα, being frequently found in whole-line formulae, and indeed, many other metaphors in Iliad book 1, were “emptied of their meaning.”

126 Parry 1933, 42. One can see the danger inherent in this methodology even by going to the scholia of Iliad book 1 and seeing where they use the terms μεταφορικός or μεταφορά in comparison to Parry, e.g. A 132/Z ὁ παρελθείς σύνοικος ἀπὸ τὴν δύναμιν οὕτω τῆς πατρίδος. ZYQ. This is not noticed by Parry. A particularly jarring instance from book 2 is B 155/Z νόστος ὁ εἰς οἶκον ἀνακομίσας, παρά τὸ ἡδύ καὶ γνήσιον τῆς πατρίδος, ὃς ἔδραμεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐδεσμάτων. ZYQX. This appears to be glossing, what is in effect Modern Greek νόστιμος “tasty,” and is a nice example of the highly subjective nature of metaphoricity, as well as the occasionally haphazard nature of the scholia.
chapter, we saw how even the “deadest” metaphors can be revived in context, but let us examine the nature of Parry’s claims. His understanding of Homeric language as the result of a diachronic process, what he labels as “traditional,” leads him to say that this phrase in the Homeric poems has been stripped of any particularizing meaning, and is just a metrically convenient short-hand for “speech” in Homer’s “fixed diction.” It is useful because it allows the poet to compose a line while easily integrating the proper name of the speaker. This is part of Parry’s effort to emphasize that one must understand Homeric poetry as oral poetry, a mission with which I am sympathetic, although I disagree with certain particulars. As he says:\footnote{127}{Ibid.}

Indeed, poetry thus approaches music most closely when the words have rather a mood than a meaning. Nor should one think that since the meaning is largely lost it ceases to matter if the meaning is good. Though the meaning be felt rather than understood it is there, as it matters whether music idly heard be bad or good. Of such a kind is the charm of the fixed metaphor in Homer. It is an incantation of the heroic.

One must certainly take into account the use of formulaic language when dealing with metaphor, but I see the realities of formulaic language as complicating our ability to identify metaphor, rather than indicating that there was no emic sense of meaning (and therefore no potential for metaphor). Parry attempts to mind-read the Homeric poet(s), implying that since every usage is quite similar, and there are so many usages, the expression must be threadbare and devoid of any particular meaning.\footnote{128}{Parry examines the usage of ἔπειτα πτερόντα in a follow-up study of 1937, which responds to Calhoun 1935, which claims that ἔπειτα πτερόντα denote an emotional speech.}\footnote{129}{Parry 1937, 60.} Parry elaborates in a later article in a way that would disturb most current Homerists.\footnote{129}{Parry 1937, 60.}

Thus, in order to hold that Homer uses the phrase only when he has in mind speeches of some given sort, one has to argue both that Homer never wanted to say in just a verse ‘and he said’ and also that,
when he wants to use πτερόεντα, he plans the syntax ahead in such a way as not to have to give the
name of the speaker when he introduces the speech. This would be a very complex sort of verse-making
and quite foreign to the way in which such traditional and oral song as that of Homer is composed.
The singer of oral narrative rarely plans his sentence ahead, but adds verse to verse and verse part to
verse part until he feels that his sentence is full and finished.

The response of Paulo Vivante is, I think, correct: “Rather the question should be put thus: why is it
that the moment of the utterance should be so emphasized as to occupy a whole line?”130 In terms of
answering Vivante’s question, one could reasonably invoke the pragmatic notion that an oral poet
would want a full line in order to give himself a few precious seconds to plan the following speech
during performance. But ultimately, I think, any response along these lines suffers from the same
difficulties as any attempt to simulate the mind of an emic speaker. I would say instead that the volume
of this phrase’s use, which can only have occurred within a diachronic process of transmission of
Homeric language between generations of poets, makes it very difficult for etic commentators to say
anything about what an emic speaker of Greek (poet/performer or audience) would have thought.

And the question remains, at what period? Would a Greek in 566/5 BCE have thought ἔπει α πτερόεντα
to be a lively metaphor of some-sort, what of his grandfather, or grandson? Would the performer and
each individual audience member in a crowd of thousands at a festival never think that ἔπει α πτερόεντα
had any meaning at all, other than “words”? There is no way to say for sure, although the fact that the
scholia do interpret the phrase as meaningful makes this scenario unlikely, for example, ἀφανίζονται γάρ
tά ἔπη πτερόεντα όντα. (b(BCE3E4)Τ' ad Il. 16.111) “For words disappear, because they are
feathered/winged.”131

130 Vivante 1975, 5 n.2.

131 See Combellack 1950, 24, citing the BT scholia ad Il. 16.101. He also says of ἔπει α πτερόεντα, quite prudently in my opinion,
“There is nearly unanimous agreement that it means that words fly, weather they fly like birds or like arrows. From this
some have gone on to the probably erroneous conclusion that he adjective has a particularizing effect and that winged
This discussion is in general agreement with Richard Martin (1989, 35), who observes that all instances of ἐπεα πτερόεντα introduce, in the term of John Searle, “directives.” Each speech requests that the addressee do something. With regards to the meaning, he concludes:132

There is no guarantee that the metaphor underlying ἐπεα πτερόεντα actually was perceived in one specific way by the audience; it could be a dead metaphor, completely unrelated to the function of ‘winged words’ as a speech-introducing phrase. If we wish to attempt a consistent interpretation, however, Gladstone’s solution might be reconsidered. For the phrase, as we have seen, cues the listener to a directive (thus the ‘arrow’ is an apt image); at the same time, it focuses attention on the physical, enduring nature of words, as ἐπεα. These words are like birds, then, but not in their free flight. Rather, ἐπεα πτερόεντα resemble the insistent hovering motion of a bird beating its wings.

From an etic perspective, we can say that spoken words do not have feathers, or wings, or exist as entities outside of sound-waves (itself a visual metaphor), occasionally captured in recordings. And so we can examine the metaphor of “feathered words” without making hard claims about what ancient Greeks thought, unless they themselves tell us.

The Flight of Living Words

An old saw in historical linguistics is that if one has a good idea, a 19th century German probably had it first. In this case, Wilhelm Wackernagel is the apparent primus inventor of an extended analysis of “words as birds.” In an exhaustive 1860 work, he compiles a running commentary on, what

words are words which can with special aptness be said to fly, either, for instance, because they are clearly and immediately understood and so may fittingly be compared to feathered arrows flying straight to a target, or because the speaker spoke more rapidly than usual and so his words could fittingly be compared to the swift flight of birds.”

132 Martin cites with approval Gladstone 1874, 844, “It is not the mere feather, but the wing which is described. It is not a random, but a carrying force. The word is a weapon, and bears its mission through the air.” One wonders if it is demonstrable that ἐπεα πτερόεντα itself has something to do with the directive force, or if this is already encoded in the use of προσαυδάω or ἀγερεύω, the two verbs with which ‘feathered words’ appear. This actually overlaps significantly with Vivante’s effort, which is an attempt to analyze the emic meaning of the phrase as pre-verbal (Vivante 1975, 11), “Events rendered as experience, experience articulated into words—this we continually find in the poems. Taken in its broad ideal meaning, the phrase ‘winged words’ vividly points to this basic process—to the way thought gathers into concrete form, into self-existing words that go their own way.”
we might now call, a cultural poetics of birds in the ancient world and in early Germanic sources, starting from the notion that ἔπεα πτερόντα represent the notion of fast-moving words that are conceived of as birds. In this study, he includes mantic and shamanistic associations of birds, along with instances of birds producing speech. He prefers “befiederte” or “feathered” words based on his understanding of what πτερόν means in Homer; to him it primarily refers to a feather, and he cites its modification of arrows. In his conclusion, he elaborates on the metaphorical system at play here, although he does not use “Metapher (vel sim.).”

...es sind die Worte, die, sobald sie aus der Seele hervor auf die Zunge treten und der Wand der Zähne entfliehn, zu Vögeln werden, zu Vögeln wie jene, die Götter und Menschen als Boten senden, zu Vögeln, die nun davon geflogen sind, die man nicht zurückrufen, nicht wieder einfangen kann, die vielleicht fliegen, wohin sie nicht sollten, und wohin sie sollten, dahin nicht gelangen... (46).

This seems to anticipate, with more elaboration, Stanford’s comment that “Winged words’ originally was a transference from the idea of birds escaping from a cage.” This larger system of conceptual metaphors involves the formula: |α – [ποίος φύγειν ἕρκος διόντων]| “What word has fled the barrier of your teeth?”

To the metaphorical system of animate words, R. Drew Griffith (1995) adds

133 Wackernagel 1860, 5. Letoublon 1999, 325, incidentally, takes this to mean that Wackernagel views the words as arrows, ostensibly out of confusion as to why he would use “befiederte” instead of “geflügelte.” This misapprehension is also found in Reece 2009, 319 n.12. D’Avino (1981, 110) also opts for birds, but has much in common with Wackernagel’s treatment of bird-speech as representing something divine, “Questa ‘parola vestita di penne,’ questo ‘oracolo alato’, questo ‘volo messaggero’ sembra rappresentare dunque un antichissimo nesso metaforico, nel quale peraltro l’immagine gravitava sul sostantivo piuttosto che sull’aggettivo.”

134 “There are words that, whenever they run forth from the soul on the tongue and fly beyond the wall of teeth, become birds, birds like those that gods and men send as messages, birds, that having flown away, one cannot call back nor recapture, that perhaps fly where they shouldn’t, and that don’t reach where they should.”

135 Stanford 1936, 137.

136 Il. 4.350, 14.83, Od. 1.64, 3.230, 5.22, 19.492, 21.168, 23.70. Paolo Vivante (1975, 2) advanced this line of thinking, although he is still using the definition of metaphor as a trope rather than as a fundamental process of cognition: “The idea of words as something self-existent and not a mere means of communication is beautifully implied in the Homeric phrase ἔπεα πτερόντα. The epithet is self-explaining, words have wings in that they fly from the speaker’s mouth to the listener’s ears. For Homer this was hardly a metaphor. He perceived in words a concrete reality: breath gathering into voice, sound formed into meaning and travelling through the air.” This is precisely a metaphor, since a metaphor is a conceptual mapping that
στρεπτὴ δὲ γλώσσῃ ἐστὶ βροτῶν (Il. 20.248), which he argues means “The tongue is the door-hinge of men.” There is also suggestive iconographic evidence indicating that there was a conceptual metaphor of words as birds. On a black-figure cup in the Vatican, dating to the first half of the 6th century, Ajax and Achilles are involved in negotiations.137 Usually this is the focus of iconographic analysis when this cup is discussed.138 What to my knowledge has not been noticed is that, in the scene where the two are speaking, as indicated by their gestures, birds fly directly in front of their heads towards the other man. Moreover, the only other flying bird on the cup moves from left to right, and on the far left is a man, potentially a herald, with his arm raised.

Therefore, it seems as though this is a 6th century iconographic representation of Homeric ἐπεα πτερόντα as birds that fly towards an intended recipient. Moreover, this would feature a visual representation of the conditions for ἐπεα πτερόντα as they occur in the Homeric narrative: the phrase only appears in addresses from one person to another (sometimes two) in a close setting. The more famous potential representation of ἐπεα πτερόντα is on the fresco from the walls of the Mycenaean-era megaron at Pylos, on which apparently a bard sits on the far right side, facing left with lyre in hand, and a bird speeds, roughly level with the bard’s head, from right to left.139 If this does represent ἐπεα πτερόντα, it would be outside of the Homeric narrative, instead referring to the performance context of poetry in the great hall at Pylos.

manifests itself in language, and does not imply belief or disbelief. This is not an anachronistic criticism, since this was essentially the conclusion of I.A. Richards.

137 Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, A343; BAD 2508.
139 ASCSA 26; 43 H 6; Lang 2015, 80, 245, pls. 27, 125, 126, A(125).
The Word as Arrow

As mentioned earlier, the other metaphor of ἐπεικὸς πτερόεντα is that of the arrow.\textsuperscript{140} Evidence from Homeric poetry indicates that the adjective πτερόεις is a standard way to characterize an arrow in Homeric Greek. The notion of speech as a missile is also prevalent in Homeric poetry, and the recent argument of Patrizia Laspia (2002) is that the metaphor refers to the embodied act of sending forth the voice from the body like an arrow, directed to a target. She collects several examples of speech-acts in Homer using the same verbal actions as the shooting of arrows:\textsuperscript{141}

1) ὅπα λειρίεσσαν ἱείσι (II. 3.152)
2) τόσσην ἐκ στήθεσφιν ὅπα κρείων ἐνοσίχθων / ἥκεν· (II. 14.150–1)
3) ὃς φάσαν ἱείσι δηκακάλλιμον· αὐτάρ ἔμον κήρ (Od. 12.192)\textsuperscript{142}

To these, we may add, ὃ πότοι ἢ ἢ ἄλοιν ἐποὺς ἀκβαλον ἕματι κειν (II. 18.324). The language used of a missed arrow-shot is also used of speech that fails. Diomedes taunts Pandarus after his shot misses him, ἡμβροτες οὐδ’ ἔτυχε (II. 5.287) “You missed nor did you hit (me).”\textsuperscript{143} In the underworld, Odysseus tells Achilles of his son, αἰὲ πρῶτος ἔβαζε καὶ οὐχ ἕμαρταν μῦθων· (Od. 11.511) “He always was speaking first and did not did not miss the mark with his words.”\textsuperscript{144} Moreover, the metaphor of word as projectile is

\textsuperscript{140} The major proponents of this have been Thomson 1936; Durante 1958/68, esp. 5–8/240–5; Latacz 1968; Nünlist 1998, 143 n. 3; Laspia 2002.

\textsuperscript{141} Laspia 2002, 447

\textsuperscript{142} Cf. e.g. ἕζετ’ ἔπειτ’ ἀπάνευθε νεών, μετὰ δ’ ἤν ἔηκε· (II. 1.48), ἥκε δ’ ἐπ’ Ἀργείασι κακάκ’ ἐλεος· (II. 1.382), δ’ δ’ ὀψὶ ἄλιν ἐλεος ἕκεν; (II. 4.498, 15.575).

\textsuperscript{143} Cf. ἄλλ’ ἦ γε καὶ τόθ’ ἐμαρτε(ν) (II. 8.311 = 13.518), Ἀτρείδης μὲν ἐμαρτε, παραὶ δὲ οἱ ἐπέπετ’ ἐγχος. (II. 11.233). For a cognitive linguistic examination of the meaning of τυγχάνω “to strike a target” from the perspective of prototype semantics, see Clark 2010, 129–30.

\textsuperscript{144} For a detailed comparison of the conceptual metaphor of “missing the mark” in Greek sources with that of “wandering” in Roman sources, see Short 2013.
commonplace in Greek epinician poetry of the fifth century. One notices that in nearly all of these cases, the metaphor is based on the notion of physical accuracy of speech. One either does or does not “hit the mark.” This is consistent with cross-cultural conceptual metaphors that describe human communication, to be discussed below. For additional evidence from the ancient world, I will now turn to the Indo-Iranian poetic traditions.

Metaphors of Speech and the Pragmatics of Performance

The metaphorical conceptualization of words as arrows is deeply involved in the pragmatics of performance in the Indo-Iranian traditions. The hymns are performed to the gods, so the words must be able to reach their intended recipients, often in faster or more accurate ways than those of competitors. This is seen overtly in *Rigveda* X.42:

\[
\text{ásteva sú pratarām lāyam ásyan / a}
\]
\[
\text{bhūśān i va prá bharā stómam asmai / b}
\]
\[
\text{vācā'vīprās tarata vācam aryó / c}
\]
\[
\text{ní rāmaya jāritaḥ sōma īndram / d}
\]

*RV X.42.1*

Like an archer in ambush who shoots farther,
like a busy attendant, bring forth the praise song for him.
With your speech, o inspired poets, surpass the speech of the stranger.
Bring Indra to rest at our soma, o singer.

By having words that speed faster and farther than one’s competitors, one can summon Indra to the soma sacrifice, a central Vedic ritual. These metaphors, although using similar source domain of

---


146 Cf. īṣur nā dhánvan práti dhiyate matir / a
vatsó ná mātūr úpa sarji ūdhani / b
arrows, are concerned with the distance and speed of the communication; this is unlike the Greek metaphor, in which accuracy is the primary concern. In a hymn later in the tenth mandala, the fire-god Agni is addressed:

\[
yajñāir śūḥ saṃnāmamāno agne / a
vācā śalyāḥ aśāñibhir dihānāḥ / b
tābhīr vidhya hṛdaye yātudhānān / c
pratīqué bāhūṁ práti bhaṅdhi eśām / d
\]
\[RV X.87.4\]

Fitting your arrows to the bow with sacrifices, o Agni, and smearing their shafts along with their points with speech, with these pierce the sorcerers in the heart. Break their arms, turned against (us), in turn.

In this case, the conceptualization is of words as arrows that, because they are weaponized, can defeat the opponents of the poet-sacrificer. In this case, the god Agni is asked to intervene on the poet’s behalf. This competitive instance of words as arrows finds a rather close parallel in the Iranian traditions.\(^{147}\) In the Warštmānsr-nask the second commentary of the Old Avesta that is preserved in the Dēnkard (9.24.5, 7, 9), the successful prayers of the prophet Zarathustra strike enemies like arrows.\(^{148}\)

\[
urūdhāreva duhe āgra āyat / c
āṣya vratēṣu āpi sóma iṣyate / d
RV IX.69.1
\]

Like an arrow on a bow, my thought is aimed.
It is released like a calf to the udder of its mother.
Like (a cow) with a broad stream, it gives milk as it comes here in the lead.
Under the commandments of this one [=Soma the god], the soma (juice) is dispatched.

\(^{147}\) For more on the competitive metaphor, see Dunkel 1979, 10, with n.38 on ἐπει αὐτόντα and Pindaric arrows of speech.

\(^{148}\) See Skjærvø, fthc., 327. My thanks to him for sharing this with me in advance. On Zarathustra, see Skjærvø 2003.
In a forthcoming book, Prods Oktor Skjærvø discusses the Avestan verbs *fra-daxš* “to throw (with the right hand)” and *paiti-ah* “to shoot in response (an arrow or spear)” in their martial and poetic contexts. In the *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti*, the oldest core of the Avestan liturgy, these verbs are used in the projection of words from the poet-sacrificer to the great god Ahura Mazda, and from Ahura Mazda back to the poet-sacrificer:

imā āt ūxā vacā’ ahūrā mazdā aṣm manaiiā vahehiiā frauuaocāmā, ūxām aṭ aēšām paitiāstāɾmcā fradaxstāɾmcā dadamaïdē // ašātaçcā hacā vaŋhōuçcā manaihō vaŋhōuçcā xṣaθrāt staotāï ñ.TXT ahūrā staotōibiiō aibi ūxā ūxai ūxőibiiō yasnā ūxai yasnōibiiō.

*YH*. 35.9–10

“Thus, we adopt you, O Ahura Mazda, as the one who shoots back and throws these words and sayings — in accordance with Order and good thought and good command,— let it be through praises, O Ahura, for praises, through an utterance for utterances, through a sacrifice for sacrifices.”

This has a close parallel in the second mandala of the *Rigveda*:

\[
\begin{align*}
tājyena kṣipreṇa brāhmaṇas pātir / & a \\
yātra vāṣṭi prá tād aśnoti dhāṅvanā / & b \\
tāsyā sādhvīr īṣavō yābhīr āsyati / & c \\
nṛcākṣaśa dvśaye kāṁṇayonayāḥ / & d
\end{align*}
\]

---

149 E.g. īṣuuascit aēšām orazfiio.parana
hušaxtaṭ haca ūnuuanāṭ
jiia.jatājḥō vazamna...
arštaiascit aēšām huxşnuta
tiṣra daraya.arštaiia
vazamna haca bāzubiiō...
zarštuuacit aēšām fradaxšaniia
vazamna haca bāzubiiō...
*YT*. 10.39

yaṭci ṣhuuastm anahieiti
yaṭci tāṭum apaiieiti...
*YT*. 10.21a

150 This translation owes much to the teaching of Prods Oktor Skjærvo.
RV II.24.8

The lord of the sacred formulation with his swift bow whose string is truth—where he wishes, there he reaches.
To him belong the straight-flying arrows [=the hymns] with which he shoots—(arrows) to be seen, drawing the gaze of men, and whose womb is the ear.

At first, these arrows of speech in Indo-Iranian traditions may seem far removed from current conceptualizations of language. However, they appear to function within the conceptual metaphor of COMMUNICATION IS TRANSMISSION. In a recent article, Emanuel Kulczycki has examined of the transmission metaphor in detail, and following Grady 1998 subdivides it into three parts, the conduit metaphor, the container metaphor, and the transfer metaphor. Three examples taken from Ready 1993 illustrate each:

1. Try to get your thoughts across better.

2. None of Mary’s feelings came through to me with any clarity.

3. You still haven’t given me any idea of what you mean.

The conduit metaphor implies a connection between the two speakers, the container metaphor conceptualizes words as containing emotions or thoughts, and the transmission metaphor takes communication as an act of sending and receiving. All of these are essentially responses to the vagaries of human communication: how can we account for when we communicate effectively or ineffectively?
We conceptualize using metaphors based on the physical movement of objects. This is the same

---

151 Reddy 1993, see also Grady 1998.
152 Kulczycki 2014.
concept that underlies WORDS AS PROJECTILES. The hymn succeeds or fails because the words do or do not reach their intended target, the divine recipient. What better way to ensure the success than by conceptualizing words as arrows, able to travel long distances? In returning to Homeric ἐπεαπτερόντα, we find that their 'performative context' is instead in the Homeric narrative among speakers in close physical proximity to one another. The pragmatic concerns of the Indo-Iranian performative context are absent. I would like to suggest, speculatively, that the archaic Greek conceptualization of ἐπεαπτερόντα interacts with the intimate performative context of the poetry itself, both in terms of their conceptualization as arrows and birds. The older metaphor, from comparative evidence involving cognate formations of *pet- “to fly” appears to be that of arrows, but the Pylos fresco, with the bard seated and ostensibly performing for the local audience, perhaps shows the performative conditions that privileged the related metaphor of words that are animated and that flutter around a room, released from the mouth of the singer like a bird from a cage. That accuracy, “hitting the mark,” is the primary concern of metaphorical conceptualization of speech as arrows in Greek is also perhaps indicative of this metaphor’s application to everyday speech. There is no need to worry about the distance of the words; they are not travelling to the heavens, only to the immediate audience. The fragmentary nature of the fresco and its iconographically isolated nature preclude any firm conclusion on this point, but I think it is at least worthy of being entertained.

Reviving a Metaphor in Homeric Context

I spoke earlier about reviving a dead metaphor by introducing a specific context that reminds speakers of the lexical identity of the conventionalized phrase or word. In English, “to understand” has

---

154 For the hymn as a chariot and a boat, see RV X.135.
really no spatial connotation to it (cf. German *verstehen*, cognate with English “for[e]stand” OE *forståndan*), unless one’s attention is brought precisely to the collocation of “under” and “stand.” It is a feature of certain dialects of American English to indicate thorough understanding by saying that one “overstands” something. The spatial metaphor, once dead as dead can be, lives. I have tried to stay away from emic simulation of lexical metaphoricity, but in what follows, I will provide a speculative account of how this might work in Homeric poetry.

Let us entertain the scenario of a Homeric poet composing in performance, who is aware of the conventional character of ἐπεα πτερόντα, but who would like to revive it in a certain context. One might, for example, look at the sequence of two lines in book 4 of the *Iliad*, referring to Pandarus’ stringing his bow before he attempts to kill Menelaus: ἐκ δ’ ἔλετ’ ἵν / ἀβλητα πτερόντα μελαινῶν ἔρμ’ ὀδυνάων—(*Iliad* 4.117–18).

The notion here, for the audience, would simply be that Pandarus is associated with ἵν... πτερόντα, with the adjective being a standard modifier of arrows in the *Iliad*. Menelaus avoids death, and the language of arrows appears throughout the book (δῖστός 4.118, δῖστος 4.125, βέλος 4.129, δῖστός 4.134, δῖστος 4.139, βέλος 4.185 [after Agamenon’s speech to Menelaus]). Finally, Agamemnon addresses Talthybius the herald and asks him to find Machaon, the healer:

"Ἡ καὶ Ταλθύβιον θεῖον κήρυκα προσήγει. Ταλθύβι, ὅτι τάχιστα Μαχάον δεῦρο κάλεσσον φῶς Άσκληπιοῦ ἵδιν ἀμίμωνος Ἰητήρος, ἄφορα ἢδε Μενέλαον ἄρτιόν Ἀτρέου ἱδιν, ἄν τινας δῖστεύσας ἔβαλεν τόξων ἐν εἰδός Τρώων ἢ Λυκίων, τῷ μὲν κλέος, ἄμμι δὲ πένθος.

155 Wiseman 2005 is an examination of metaphors of speech in Homer from a cognitive linguistic perspective, but does not include ἐπεα πτερόντα."
And he (Agamemnon) spoke and addressed Talthybius, the divine herald:

“Talthybius, call here as quickly as possible Machaon, the man who is the son of the blameless healer Asclepius, So that he see Menelaus, the warlike son of Atreus, whom someone, skilled in archery, fired at and struck, either a Trojan or a Lycian: a glory to him, but sorrow for us.”

So he spoke, nor did the herald disobey him after listening, and he set off amongst the host of the bronze-greaved Achaians, looking about for the hero Machaon. And he noticed that man, standing there. And around him there were strong ranks of shield-bearers, who followed him from horse-nourishing Tricca.

And standing close to him Talthybius spoke feathered words to him:

“Rise son of Asclepius, lord Agamemnon calls, In order that you see Menelaus the warlike leader of the Achaeans, whom someone, skilled in archery, fired at and struck, either a Trojan or a Lycian: a glory to him, but sorrow for us.

From line 4.117 to this point, at a pace of about 5 seconds per line, roughly seven minutes have passed in performance, largely on the topic of Menelaus’ arrow wound, with repetition between speeches of the phrase ὅν τις ὀϊστέυσας ἐβαλεν τόξων ἐῤεἰδώς (4.196, 206) in reference to the unnamed Pandarus.

Sandwiched between these two phrases, at 4.203 is the formulaic phrase ἀγχοῦ δ’ ἱστάμενος ἐπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα. Is this a case of reviving a metaphor in context, where πτερόεντα here, surrounded by a narrative primarily devoted with the effects of a missile, evokes that the words themselves may resemble the arrow of Pandarus (modified itself by πτερόεντα at 4.118)? In this case, the damage of the
“feathered arrow” is counteracted by the “feathered words” that lead to Menelaus’ healing. It is entirely possible that this is completely an accident, and that there was no intent involved here. It is also possible that nobody in the audience would have blinked an eye, but I certainly have.
Chapter 3: The Burial of Patroclus and the Poetics of Memory

... 

see upon my shoulders is the yoke
that is not a yoke
don’t worry I know you’re dead
but tonight
turn your face again

-Frank Bidart, “The Yoke”

The foregoing diachronic analysis of “winged words” was an attempt to situate the lexical metaphor, and its associated conceptual metaphors, in a larger poetic and anthropological context. The following will be a synchronic analysis of conceptual metaphors in Homeric poetry, focusing on books 22 and 23 of the Iliad. The goal is to treat the relationship between simile and metaphor, both from a conceptual and linguistic standpoint, concluding that the similes in Iliad 22 correspond to metaphors in Iliad 23, and that this correspondence itself is an emergent manifestation of Homeric compositional strategies. The conceptual metaphors of the race and the chase, introduced in similes of Iliad 22, are structuring principles of Homeric composition, and their appearance in the funerary preparations of Iliad 23 will inform our reading of the actual races of the funeral games in the following chapter.156 After comparing the use of similes and metaphors, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the linguistic differences between simile and metaphor in Homeric poetry.

A large part of the attention devoted to Iliad 23 has focused on ethical or historical questions: to what extent is Achilles changed in the lead up to the dramatic ransom of Hector’s corpse in the final book, and what can we glean from the games about early Greek athletics or ritual practice. The

156 On “structuring” devices in Homeric poetry, see Bonifazi and Elmer 2012, 100.
following will focus primarily on the poetics of the narrative, and what they reveal about the poetics of Homeric epic. Among the notionally “ritual” actions which apparently intensify during the final books of the *Iliad* are those of treatment of the corpse, burial, oath-making, bathing, lamentation, sacrifice, supplication, and feasting.\(^{157}\) Especially in the latter books of the *Iliad*, all are preludes or responses to the various important deaths within and outside the narrative.\(^{158}\) To these, I would add that the themes of memory and memorialization feature prominently throughout the final two books of the *Iliad*.

Many have rightly pointed out parallels between books 1 and 24 of the *Iliad*, but the equally parallel nature of books 2 and 23 is particularly relevant for the following analysis.\(^{159}\) Insofar as the funeral games of Patroclus are a detailed act of memory that serve as a functional and positional parallel


158 For a general treatment of Homeric portrayal of and response to death, see Griffin 1980, alongside which the review of Lynn-George (1982) should be read.

to the catalogue of ships, details of their correspondence will feature in the following analysis.\textsuperscript{160} That the games are a locus of interaction between peers and between generations of men raises further, deeply familiar questions about engagement with the past: what is the balance between traditional and innovative techniques, how can one compete with and respect both his peers and ancestors? The games of Patroclus refract the \textit{Sitz im Leben} of Homeric poetry, namely the performative and agonistic context of a festival, while marshalling the (co-)memorative function of a funeral and its associated games to redeploy imaginatively the events before, during and after the \textit{Iliad}.\textsuperscript{161} The games are an occasion for memory, and memory’s enactment within the narrative, and by the narrator. Therefore, they are an emergent metaphor for the performance of Homeric poetry, and represent conceptual metaphors that underlie Homeric poetics.

Cognitive treatments of memory’s role in epic poetry have received welcome attention in the 21st century. Elizabeth Minchin has devoted a large scale-work (2001) to the use of memory in description within the Homeric narrative, and an article outlining a movement-based mnemotechnique and its relationship to the movement of characters within the Homeric narrative (2007), comparing “hodological” memory techniques in Australian oral poetics. The basic distinction is between the “technique of \textit{loci}” found in Cicero’s description of Simonides’ ability to reconstruct the

\textsuperscript{160} On the catalogue of ships as a performance of geographical memory tied to a specific spatial arrangement, see Minchin 2001, 79–80, 84–7.

position of the banqueters before they were crushed by a collapsed roof, which privileges a largely static arrangement, *ordo*, and Quintilian’s elaboration upon this, which includes the *movement* of the subject through a memory-space.\(^{165}\) Recently, using a similar cognitive methodology of mnemotechnique, Jenny Strauss Clay (2011) has attempted to reconstruct a unified perspective of the Homeric narrator during the Iliadic battle books.\(^{163}\) Anna Bonifazi (2008) has examined discourse markers within Homeric narrative as indicating memorative “road-signs.”\(^{164}\) Egbert Bakker (1995, 2005, 2007) has explored the pragmatics of discourse markers along with the larger thematics of memory in epic poetry.\(^{165}\) He puts great emphasis on the “embodied” and performative nature of memory, even within the narrative.\(^{166}\)

The Memory and Metaphor of the Chase

The narrative of book 23 describes an extended attempt to remember correctly; the anxiety of memory is made overt when Achilles proclaims to the Achaeans after the death of Hector: εἶ δὲ θανόντων περ καταλήψοντ’ εἰν Λιθαό / αὖτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ κεῖθι φίλου μεμνήσομ’ ἐταίρου (Il. 22.389–390). This concern is concretized in Achilles’ obsession with memorializing Patroclus, and one can see the


\(^{163}\) The effort is ambitious and worth consideration on its own merits, but I think it systematically underplays the bird’s eye, or god’s eye, perspective on the proceedings, cf. de Jong, Nünlist 2004 for a treatment of the multiple perspectives during the narrative. See also Tsagalis 2012 on spatial imagination in the *Iliad*.

\(^{164}\) Bonifazi 2008, 60, “By means of these markers the mind’s eye of the performer and of the audience, who both re-see the mythical events, is helped in visualizing the next focus of the visual field.”

\(^{165}\) Earlier works include: Bakker 1993b, 1993c, 1997a, 1997b, 1999. See also Scodel 2002a on signs, memory, and recognition.

\(^{166}\) Bakker 2007, 70, with particular emphasis on μνήμης and its relationship to memory. I hope to assess elsewhere the relationship of the roots *men* and *mneh2*, the equation of which features heavily in most thematic discussions of memory. For a detailed study of memory’s thematic role in Homeric poetry, see Nikkanen 2011. See also Purves 2010, 32ff.
ritualized events surrounding his burial (until Iliad 23.257) as conditioning the creation of the ensuing games. Achilles’ preparations include his organizing and participating in a series of elaborate commemorations, leading the chariots of the Myrmidons by circling Patroclus’ body three times, leading a lament, and organizing funerary sacrifices followed by a feast. The vast extent of the pre-burial activities might have caught an audience member’s attention even before Patroclus’ shade appears to an exhausted Achilles in a dream. His first words to a sleeping Achilles are:

εὖδεις, αὐτάρ ἑμεῖς λελασμένος ἐπλέει Ἀχιλλεὺ.
οὐ μὲν μεν ζώοντος ἀκόθεις, ἀλλὰ θανόντος;
θάπτε με δτί τάχιστα πύλας Ἁιδαρ περήσω.
Il. 23.69–71
You are sleeping, but you have become forgetful of me, Achilles.
You were not neglectful of me while I was living, but only while dead.
Bury me as quickly as possible; let me pass through the gates of Hades.

Whether or not we agree with Patroclus’ characterization of Achilles, this calls into question the sufficiency and effectiveness of Achilles’ memorialization of his companion. The mourning for Patroclus began in Iliad 18, with the lamentations at Iliad 18.22–77 and 18.314–55. Given that the grief of Achilles stretches from book 18 to the beginning of book 24, it seems that his faults do not lie in the effort, but in the technique of his memorialization. Patroclus insists on a quick cremation and burial,

---

167 This order is exceptional in Homeric poetry, since normally the communal activity only happens after the cremation and burial, as in Iliad 7.29–41 and 24.786–894 and Od. 24.57–97, where there are the funeral games after Achilles’ burial, but no feast. In the case of book 23, Achilles organizes the feast before the burial, and then continues, or perhaps restarts, the communal activity in the form of the funeral games. For parallelism between funerary sequences in Iliad 7 (war-dead), 24 (Hector), and 18–24 (Patroclus), see Kelly 2017, 2, with n.5, citing Edwards 1986; Andronikos 1968, 34–7; Weiler 1981, 79–88; Laser 1987; Pedaros 1988, to which add Petropoulou 1988 for a discussion of Patroclus’ tumulus and Beck 2005, 246. On the differences between the two funerals of Iliad 24, see Kelly 2007a, 382–4.

168 It is unclear whether Achilles participates in the feast and breaks his fast, although it is strongly suggested by Achilles’ pronouncement, δορυρομέν εὐθαδε πάντις (23.11). On the roles of voice and voicelessness in the representation of Homeric ghosts, see Heath 2005. On the parallelism/antithesis between this dream and the dream of Agamemnon in book 2, see Taplin 1992, 252, citing (in n.1) Segal 1971, 51ff and Macleod 1982, 28–9.
and Achilles’ desire to honor Patroclus by an elaborate pre-funerary sequence of lamentation is decidedly not in keeping with the wishes of the deceased. In fact, Patroclus claims that his delayed burial has prevented him from crossing into Hades, keeping him instead as an outsider in the underworld (Il. 23.72–4). Achilles, despite his best intentions, has harmed Patroclus yet again. In his obsession to honor Patroclus and defile Hector, he attempts to distinguish the two as much as possible, yet according to Patroclus’ shade, he has missed the point, and his enactment of memory is misguided.

In concentrating on lamentation instead of burial, he has accidentally produced a parallelism between the unburied corpses of Hector and Patroclus. While in the case of the former Achilles has overtly attempted to mutilate the body and leave it as carrion, the latter lies honored but unburied due to his fundamental misunderstanding: he presumably believes that the associated rituals of

169 Instead of elaborate pre-burial ritual, Patroclus wants to be cremated and interred as soon as possible. His requests concern what happens after his cremation: namely, he wants his ashes to be held in the same urn as Achilles’, referring specifically to the urn given by Thetis (Il. 23.83–92). Patroclus desires continuity in his companionship with Achilles, in life and death, perhaps even in immortality. On the backstory of the golden amphora that will hold Achilles’ and Patroclus’ bones, which was made by Hephaestus and given to Thetis by Dionysus (Od. 24, 72–84, Stesichorus fr. 234P) as a reward for her protection from Lycurgus (Il. 6.130–40), see Nagy 1999, 209, which analyzes the emphasis on the bones as an indication of the heroes’ impending immortality. For a defense of the Homeric lines’ authenticity, see Dué 2011. Patroclus’ recollection of the circumstances of his exile, a violent dispute about a game of dice (ἀμφ’ ἀστραγάλοισι χολωθείς, Il. 23.88) shows that even games can lead to violence, which might make one wary of the aftermath of the individual contests in the coming funeral games. This warning explains, in part, Achilles’ tendency to intervene during the games.


171 Achilles purposefully delays Patroclus’ burial at Il. 18.334–42.

172 Achilles unintentionally treats dead Patroclus the same way that Scamander wishes to treat Achilles after defeating him; see Nagler 1974, 147–66.
lamentation are the most important aspects of memorialization, and that the status of the corpse does not affect the deceased’s experience of the afterlife. Achilles is focused on the social responsibility of lamentation and memory: he and the Greeks must mourn, and honor Patroclus sufficiently, but this is not because Patroclus has any continuing relationship to the treatment of his body independent of the quality and quantity of the living’s memorialization of him.

At the beginning of book 23, the narrative attributes Achilles’ sleep to his physical exhaustion from this same pursuit of Hector (Ἑκτόρ ἐπάθησων προτι Ἰλιον ἔγειρόμεσαν... Il. 23.64). This is what has allowed sleep to finally “reach him” (...τὸν ὑπνός ἐμαρπτε... Il. 23.62). The two verbs in the aforementioned lines are used in similes describing Achilles’ chase of his sworn enemy in book 22. The first is used in the simile (Il. 22.139–44) comparing Hector to a dove (τρήρων πέλειαν, Il. 22.140) and Achilles to a hawk (κίρκος, Il. 22.139), to be discussed further below in the case of the archery contest. The hawk darts after (ἐπάθησε, Il. 22.142) the dove, just as Achilles is wearied from pursuing Hector (Ἑκτόρ ἐπάθησων, Il. 23.64). Moreover, the characterization of sleep “reaching” Achilles (ἐμαρπτε, Il.

173 Achilles’ misapprehension is demonstrated in his exclamation upon waking, ὅ πότοι ἢ ἡ τῆς ἴστι καὶ εἰν Αἴδαο δόμοισι / ψυχη καὶ εἶδόλον, ἀτάρ φρένες ὅκε ἐν πάμπταν (Il. 23.103–4).

174 A further irony lies in the fact that a commonality of the two, that they both wore Achilles’ armor, prevents him from fully despoiling the corpse of Hector; he can strip the corpse, but to defile or mount the armor would be an act of self-violence; he would be despoiling Patroclus’ armor, and his own, so the second step of dishonoring the corpse is a priori impossible. Instead, he withholds and attempts to mutilate Hector’s corpse, thereby preventing the memorialization of Hector by his community. Achilles thinks that by continuing the cycle of vengeance initiated by Patroclus’ death, he is simultaneously serving his own and Patroclus’ needs, but Patroclus’ shade reveals that Achilles’ actions are misguidedly self-interested. Thanks to Rebecca Katz for helpful discussion on this topic.

175 Collocation of a participle of ἐπάθησων plus a finite form of ἔλειν used of people at Il. 10.355 and Od. 22.187.
23.62) is the verb of chasing used during the famous simile describing Hector’s flight and Achilles’ pursuit:176

\[\text{ὡς δ’ ἐν δνείρῳ οὐ δύναται φεύγοντα διώκειν:}\
\[\text{οὐ' ἀρ' ὣ τὸν δύναται ὑποφεύγειν οὖθ' ὡ διώκειν,}\
\[\text{ὡς ὣ τὸν οὐ δύναται μάρψαι ποσίν, οὖθ' ὡς ἀλύζει.}\
\[\text{Il. 22.199–201}

As in a dream one is not able to pursue a fleeing man, neither is the one man able to flee, nor the other to pursue, so that man (Achilles) was not able to catch him with his feet, nor was he (Hector) able to elude him.

Moreover, Hector, in fear for his own life, voices his concern using almost exactly the same language as the two similes above (μὴ μ’ ἀπαιρήμενον πόλιος πεδίονδε νοήσῃ / καὶ μὲ μεταίχας μάρψης ταχέσσιν πόδεσσιν, Il. 21.563–64). He is terrified that Achilles will spot him, dart after him, and catch him.177 As in the example of τρίς... τέταρτον, which I will discuss elsewhere,178 the most elaborate manifestation of this underlying “chase” schema is found precisely in the duel between Hector and Achilles in book 22. In effect, it is the culmination of the poem in which Homeric compositional strategies both of cyclical repetition and of the conceptual metaphor of “death/sleep as chase,” explored below, become most manifest.

---


177 The unchanging nature of Hector’s corpse replicates the indeterminacy of the dream-chase. Despite one’s efforts, the intended outcome is delayed indefinitely, with Athena’s intervention disrupting the stalemate in Achilles’ pursuit of Hector around the walls of Troy, and the intervention of the gods causing the futility in Achilles’ further attempts at the mutilation of Hector.

178 Forte (in prep.).
In returning to the dream involving Patroclus’ shade, I argue that it resonates with the language of pursuit, and shares particularly close verbal parallels with Achilles’ pursuit of Hector. One might note that these lines precede a dream in which Achilles is unable to embrace Patroclus’ shade (Ὣς ἄρα φωνήσας ὠρέξατο χερσὶ φίλῃσιν / οὐδ’ ἐλαβε·ψυχὴ δὲ κατὰ χθονὸς ἦτε καπνὸς / ᾤχετο τετριγυῖα, ΙI. 23.99–101). As in a dream, Hector could not escape Achilles, and Achilles could not catch Hector (without divine intervention); now a dreaming Achilles, in his brief moment of sleep, cannot embrace his friend and end his lamentation (ΙI. 23.97–8).179

The Iliad is an epic of the chase, in which the goal is not to run past one’s opponent to a goal, as in a race, but to run down one’s opponent.180 Catching is the point of pursuit. In Homeric poetry, as seen above, to sleep is to be caught by sleep, and to die is “to be caught (by death)” as if during one’s life one is constantly pursued by an invisible assailant until the moment of death.181 Death itself is something from which one must “escape,” and this notion is deeply embedded within the formulaic system of Homeric poetry.182 An example of a chase that ends in death is the case of Eurypulus:

179 Achilles cannot burn Patroclus without divine intervention, either.
180 See Purves 2011, 523–37 on pursuit in the Iliad, also discussed in the next chapter.
Eurypulus, the shining son of Euaemon, this man [Hypsenor] fleeing before him, smote on his shoulder while racing behind him after darting forth with his sword, and cut off his weighty arm, and the arm fell bloody on the plain, and his eyes rippling death and powerful fate seized.

Just as Eurypulus “caught” his opponent and was able to inflict a mortal wound upon him, so death and fate “seized” his eyes. Thus the narrative representation of a battlefield pursuit finds a semantic equivalent in the personified vision of fate and death seizing the conquered hero. As Kirk (1990, ad loc.) points out, the hapax μεταδρομάδην strongly resonates with the use of δρόμος as “race” in the games of Iliad 23. He also points out the uniqueness of this death insofar as it is the only death in the Iliad in which a spear is not used before the sword. What has gone unnoticed is that ...τὸν δὲ κατ’ ὄσσε / Ἐλλαβε πορφύρεος θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή (Il. 5.82–3, 16.333–4, 20.476–7) is a formulaic representation of death that appears to be contextually unique to those heroes who have just been “caught” in battle. We have already seen the death of Hypsenor above, and in book 16, Oilean Ajax captures Cleobulus alive (ζωὸν ἔλε, Il. 16.331), and without waiting for a supplication, kills him by striking his neck.\(^{183}\) The context of pursuit is obscure in the final case because this death appears in a catalogue of slaughter by the enraged Achilles, who, after Hector escapes with the help of Apollo, vows to kill whomever he can catch (νὸν δ’ ἄλλων Τρώων ἐπιέσομαι, δν κε κιχείω, Il. 20.454).\(^{184}\) The death in

\(^{183}\) Deserving further mention is the extended formula appearing here (16.332–4) and at book 20.475–7, (...κωπήνετι / πὰν δ’ ὑπεθερμανθή ξίφος αἵματι· τὸν δὲ κατ’ ὄσσε / Ἐλλαβε πορφύρεος θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή) where the sword is heated with blood.

\(^{184}\) Il. 20.449–54 = 11.362–7, of Diomedes to a retreating Hector, further stressing Diomedes’ role as Achilles’ stand-in. See above on the formulaic and thematic similarities between the characterization of Achilles in book 20 and Diomedes in book 5.
question is that of Ἔχεκλος (II. 20.474–7), whose name should give us pause, insofar as it is a combination of Hector’s and Patroclus’, with the first element, the verbal root Ἔχ- “to hold,” found in Ἕκτωρ (with agentive suffix), and the second element, the hypocoristic -κλος (from κλέος), found in Πάτροκλος. Therefore, this conceptual and lexical metaphor involving a target of the concept of death and the source of a pursuing assailant who catches someone is found only in cases where the narrative victim is “caught” by his slayer. The narrative description and the conceptual metaphor are mutually reinforcing in terms of both cognitive technique and surface lexicon, revealing a poetics of the chase. This may seem unfamiliar, but the conceptual metaphor of DISEASE/DEATH is WAR exists even today, albeit in typically less poetic form, in statements such as “She’s fighting a battle against cancer.” We may even see the same metaphorical process of “personification” here, which should make us wary of using Homeric poetry as evidence for belief in Death’s personage during the archaic period.\textsuperscript{185}

The various instantiations of this conceptual metaphor of DEATH/SLEEP is a PURSUER emerge from the image schema of the path. A typical conceptual metaphor that functions within this image schema is PURPOSES are PHYSICAL GOALS, as in “He’s got a long way to go before finishing his book.” This conceptual metaphor is based on the STATES are LOCATIONS metaphor, with the mapping consisting of the primary location onto the initial state, the final location onto the intended state, and the intermediate points representing the process between the two.\textsuperscript{186} The various instantiations of this metaphor may be seen in Homer and Hesiod.

\textsuperscript{185} The personifications in Homeric poetry are elaborate and moving. One thinks of not only the personified dream who, while impersonating Nestor, deceives Agamemnon in Iliad 2, but Sleep and Death who spirit away Sarpedon’s body in Iliad 16. The two umbral figures who pursue and catch mortals gently carry Sarpedon in death. The poetry of Hesiod is replete with personifications, and one could reasonably make the argument that personified death’s presence in both Homer and Hesiod would indicate that it was a popular folk-model in archaic mainland Greece. One should not, however, view this as a particularly exotic or peculiar development.

\textsuperscript{186} See Turner 1987, 113–17.
“chase” metaphors in Homeric poetry move linearly as opposed to the circular movement of the cyclic image schema. PURPOSES are PHYSICAL GOALS can accommodate multiple participants, as in “She is far ahead of him in her progress,” yet the final goal is an external mapping towards which all of the agents are moving. In the case of the CHASE conceptual metaphors, the mapping is instead on a moving goal, one’s opponent. Lakoff and Turner (1989) describe the metaphor of TIME is a PURSUER as a “composite of EVENTS are ACTIONS, TIME MOVES, and LIFE is a JOURNEY.” I am not sure that LIFE is a JOURNEY is actually applicable to this type of metaphor, and in the case of Sleep and Death as pursuers, the only one of these three conceptual metaphors that is present is EVENTS are ACTIONS, which is that of personification. There seems to be a blend of a personified Sleep/Death, on the one hand, with the metaphor MENTAL AGENCY is PHYSICAL AGENCY, or more precisely, its converse, the notion that a lack of mental agency is expressed by language determining a lack of physical agency. This then interacts with DEATH is WAR. The action of being caught expresses that one has been physically bested by death or sleep, and one’s lack of mental agency (“unconsciousness”) in death and sleep is metaphorically compared to this physical competition. This may interact with the topos that age is associated with slowness and youth with quickness, grounded in the physical realities of growing old. Death catches someone who is sufficiently slowed by age. In any case, the language of catching in duels participates in the same image schema of the path as does the conceptual metaphor involving death and sleep as pursuers.

---

During Achilles’ climactic chase of Hector around the walls of Troy, the pursuit is likened to an athletic competition, but with much higher stakes.\(^{188}\)

There the two men ran, one fleeing and the other pursuing, A noble man fled ahead, but a far better man chased him, quickly, for they did not strive for a sacrificial animal or an ox-hide, which are the prizes for men in foot-races, but for the soul of Hector, breaker of horses, they were running. As when prize-winning, single-hoofed horses around the turning posts, run especially quickly, and a great prize awaits, either a tripod or a woman when a man has died,\(^{189}\) so those two men three times whirled around the city of Priam with swift feet. And all the gods were watching them.

In the beginning of the same book, another simile directly compared Achilles to a horse in a chariot race:

\[\text{Il. 22.21–4}\]

\(^{188}\) On the “ontological metaphor” of Hector’s \(\psi\chi\gamma\), see Cairns 2003, 47, citing in n.15 Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 25–40.

\(^{189}\) This must indicate that the competition imagined in this simile is at funeral games, see Richardson 1993 ad loc. These are the same prizes offered to the winner of the chariot race in the funeral games.
Upon speaking he, with great purpose, departed toward the city, rushing as a prize-winning horse with its chariot, who easily runs at full stride over the plain, so Achilles swiftly drove his feet and knees.

In this earlier simile, Achilles sets out towards Troy as a horse on the straight-away of the race, either approaching or having rounded the turning post. Yet if we read these two similes together, we may conclude that this earlier simile is describing the beginning of the race, and that the second simile, during the combat of Achilles and Hector, describes the race’s middle, during which both men, compared to horses, round the turning post of Troy. Therefore, in the beginning of book 23, we see a reflection of previous episodes which were compared, by simile, to races, either on chariots or on foot, and these proleptically reference the impending funeral games.190

In terms of poetics, we saw earlier that narrative description of a chase in battle coincides with a conceptual metaphor of DEATH is a PURSUER, and then that Homeric poetry compares chasing and racing by simile. I will argue that within the repertoire of mnemotechniques available to the Homeric poet, one consisted of envisioning Troy as a turning post, with the start and the end of the race being located at the beach, and with various landmarks marking relative distance between the two extreme horizontal points. The various movements of troops within the Iliad in effect use these landmarks as miniature “turning points” in their own sense. Within this macro-technique of spatial

---

190 On the connection between the similes of the race in Iliad 22 and the chariot race of the funeral games, see Purves 2010, 55–9, who concludes (59) “The circular and eusynoptic nature of the two races brackets the poem within a world where the death of Achilles can be deferred, affording a pleasing unity to the epic and an easily graspable sense of a whole. To go further along the sequence of the events in the Trojan War would be to undo the unity of the epic, just as it would also be to undo the idea of a contained and surveyable landscape.” This is insightful, but I think it is important to know that, aside from the ambiguities surrounding the turning point in the chariot race, the funeral games are the only episode in the Iliad where races, narrative or simile-contained, can actually be completed. I will discuss why the metaphor of a chase, but not of a race, is fundamentally characteristic of the Iliad’s poetics.
memory and organization, the individual battles of heroes can be seen as chases. In short, the Homeric tradition uses a spatio-mnemonic scheme, in which landmarks allows the poet to recall in detail the movement of troops between the two horizontal locational points of the Achaean camp and the walls of Troy, and this is essentially the conclusion of Minchin 2008, on which there is more to be said.

Troy as a turning post

In a famous speech of Nestor, to be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, he instructs his son, Antilochus, on how to drive his chariot. At the center of this speech is the description of the turning post itself:

\[
\text{σήμα δὲ τοι ἑρέω μάλ' ἀρφαδεῖς, σιδή σὲ λήσαι.}
\text{ἔστηκε ξύλον αὖν ὁσον τ' ἄργυρι' ύπὲρ αἰθ.,}
\text{ἡ δρυὸς ἢ πεύκης· τὸ μὲν οὐ καταπύθεται ὅμβρῳ,}
\text{λὰς δὲ τοῦ ἐκατέρθην ἐρημεῖται δύο λευκῶ}
\text{ἐν ξυνοχήσιν ὁδοὶ, λεῖος δ' ἱππόδρομος ἄμφις,}
\text{ἡ τευ σήμα βροτὸν πάλαι κατατεθνῆτος,}
\text{ἡ το γε νύσσα τέτυκτο ἐπὶ προτέρῳ ἀνθρώπων,}
\]

191 The larger mnemotechnique is refracted in the chariot race itself, which as I will argue in the next chapter, metaphorically represents the nostoi of the heroes involved, in addition to narrative sequences of the Iliad.

192 See the charts of Thorton 1984, 50 and Minchin 2008, 32 which indicate the locations of the various landmarks as marking relative distance between the ships and the wall, with the former emphasizing the movement patterns of the troops. For the role of a spatial understanding of a narrative from a reading comprehension perspective, see Miller 1993, 358–63, although I do not agree with his relationship of metaphor and simile, and on performance, see Minchin 2008, 27, “I therefore propose that the poet, by way of preparation for performance, had constructed in his mind’s eye a pared-down and relatively stable spatial model along two axes of the world in which his story was to unfold; he could envisage the back and forward movement of the heroes as battle raged now closer to the citadel and now closer to the Achaean ships or the movement of the gods between the sea-depths and the peak of Olympos.” See Clay 2011 for an ambitious reconstruction of the poet’s perspective. See also Tsagalis 2012, 78–93, which offers an interesting cognitive assessment of objects as spatio-temporal markers. His account of tombs as time markers is indebted to Grethlein 2008. Solez 2012 independently identifies Troy as a metaphorical turning point on the basis of the similes of book 22 and excerpts from Aeschylus’ Agamemnon, but does not connect this to mnemonic technique or the funeral games in Iliad 23.
καί νῦν τέρματ' ἵθηκε ποδάρκης δίος Ἀχιλλεύς. 193
Il. 23.326–33

I will tell you an exceptionally clear sign, and it will not escape you. There stands a dry stump a fathom above the ground, either oak or pine, and not rotted away by rain, and two white stones lean against it on either side, in the joining place of the road, and there is a smooth track for horses around it. Either it is the grave-sign of some long-dead man, or was established as a racing mark by earlier men. And now swift-footed, shining Achilles made it the turning post.

The same word used in the simile comparing Hector and Achilles racing around Troy to the race horses racing around a turning post in book 22, τέρματα (Il. 22.162), appears here (Il. 23.333) in reference to an actual turning post, that either used to be a νύσσα “goal” or a σήμα “grave-sign” of a long-dead man. Nestor introduces this visual instruction as a σήμα “sign,” already pointing to the potential for polysemy and multiple referentiality. 194 The distinction between νύσσα and τέρματα is important, since in Homeric narration the former indicates a fixed and finite beginning or goal (Il. 23.758, Od. 8.121), and the latter indicates the point at which one turns, the intermediate goal which represents the middle, and in many cases, the point of crisis and danger. Scholarly confusion on this point arises because Nestor, within his speech, continues to describe the τέρματα as a νύσσα (Il. 23.338, 344) to Antilochus; he has apparently decided that it is a τὸ γε νύσσα τέτυκτο ἐπὶ προτέρων ἄνθρωπων, rather than τευ σήμα βροτοί πάλαι κατατεθηνότος. Indeed, if one wrecks at the τέρματα, they become, in effect, a νύσσα, because one’s race is over. Since this is the point of Nestor’s instructions, how to

---

193 For Aristarchus’ varia lectio of this line, ἥ σκῖρος ἢ τον νῦν αὖ θέτο τέρματ’ Ἀχιλλεύς, see Elmer 2008, 418–19 n.28, who translates σκῖρος as “goal-marker” or “territorial boundary.”

194 This must be related thematically and compositionally to the landmark described in Il. 2.811–15, which is called a hill by men, τὴν ἄθανατος Βατίους κυκλήσκουσιν (813), and a tomb by gods, ἀθάνατος δὲ τε σήμα πολυσκάρμοις Μυρίνης (814), on which see Grethlein 2008, 31–2.
avoid crashing, his referring to the τέρματα as a νόσσα has its own important internal logic. In any case, this turning post reflects the characteristics of previous landmarks on the very same Trojan plain, namely trees and tombs, around which troops turn in the *Iliad*.

This is most obvious in the case of the fig tree and the tomb of Ilus, past which Agamemnon leads the Achaean (II. 11.166–8), followed by their passing past the oak tree and the Scaean gate (II. 11.170). Zeus, sensing that Agamemnon is quickly approaching the walls of Troy (II. 11.181–4), sending Iris as a messenger inspires Hector to begin a counter-attack, which leads to Agamemnon’s retreat (II. 11.251–83). The spatial markers signal Agamemnon’s turning point, which is not destined to be the city of Troy. Diomedes, in book 8, was similarly the target of divine intervention, when Zeus, likewise concerned with the Achaean’s progress, shot a lightning bolt to stop Diomedes’ progress (II. 8.130–6). Agamemnon, in his *aristeia* has already surpassed the mark of Diomedes by passing the tomb of Ilus. This spatial marker signals a further turning point after Agamemnon’s retreat, when Paris, while leaning on it, shoots Diomedes in the foot with an arrow, thereby causing the son of Tydeus to retire to the ships (II. 11.369–400). Troy is Achilles’ turning point, and Patroclus’ disastrous imitation of Achilles in book 16, and his refusal to turn back, causes him to surpass Agamemnon’s mark and actually reach the battlements of Troy. It seems to be an unlikely coincidence that in book 11, marked by several “turns” of the battle tied to spatial markers, Nestor convinces Patroclus to imitate Achilles, resulting in a tragic overstep.

---

95 Σκαίας τε πύλας καὶ φηγὸν ἱκανῶν-οντο (II. 9.354 and 11.170 respectively).

96 Ἐνθά κεν ὑψίπυλον Τροίην ἔλεον ὑπὸ Ἀχαιῶν / Πατρόκλου ὑπὸ χεροὶ, περὶ πρὸ γὰρ ἔρχετε θεῖν, / εἰ μὴ Ἀπόλλων Φοίβος ἐνυμίτου ἐπὶ πύργου / ἔστη τῷ ἄλοχοι τρομεῖον, Τρώεσσι δ’ ἀρήγων (II. 16.698–701).
However, unlike Agamemnon, Patroclus does not return from his turning point alive, but is eventually carried back to the ships by his allies. One also notes that as the narrative progresses, the Greeks reach goals that are gradually closer and closer to the walls of Troy, with no *aristeia* being geographically shorter than the one before it. There is always progress in these turning points. Finally, when Achilles chases Hector around the walls of Troy in *Iliad* 22, the city itself becomes Achilles’ turning post, and only he returns back to the ships alive. Hector, on the other hand, in whose *aristeia* the Trojans reach the Greek ships, has the closest thing to a *nostos* when Priam ransoms his body and carries it back from Achilles’ tent to inside Troy. So, in the end, it is Priam and Achilles who complete the full circle of Troy’s battlefield alive. Likewise, no Trojan surpasses the length of Priam’s final journey.

We saw earlier that Paris, while leaning against the tomb of Ilus (στήλη κεκλιμένος ἀνδροκμήτῳ ἐπὶ τύμῳ, *Il. 11.371*), caused it to function as a turning point in the retreat of Diomedes. Likewise, Apollo engineers a turning-point while leaning against an oak tree (φηγῷ κεκλιμένος, *Il. 21.549*). He inspires Agenor to stand and face Achilles, then impersonates Agenor, turning Achilles away from the walls of Troy and back to the Scamander (τρέψας πάρ ποταμὸν βαθυδινῆντα Σκάμανδρον..., *Il. 21.603*). Likewise, in describing the turning post to Antilochus, Nestor mentions that two white stones lean upon it (λαῖε δὲ τοῦ ἐκάτερθεν ἐφηρέδαται δύο λευκ., *Il. 23.329*). Therefore all three turning points in the narrative are linked by people or objects leaning upon them, and the objects which mark “turning points” in battle are frequently trees, or tombs, exactly like the turning post of book 23. The presence of these “turns” in the narrative of the *Iliad* makes it tempting to invoke the *τρόπαιον*, which

---

97 Given the nature of Achilles’ death, it may also be relevant that both Paris and Agenor aim for the lower-leg.
at least during fifth century was a monument of a conquered soldier’s despoiled armor, marking the point at which the enemy turned and fled in a battle. There is no real trace of this practice in the Homeric poems, yet the presence of tombs as “turning posts” in the narrative of the Iliad could represent an aetiology for the practice, or perhaps at a deeper level is a reflection of the same cognitive processes that lead humans to mark mnemonically the variable motion of the turn with the spatial fixity of a death. For now, we may set up a conceptual metaphor of TURNING POINT is TRANSITION, which can be seen as a metaphorical blend of the more basic conceptual metaphors of CHANGE is MOTION and PURPOSES are PHYSICAL GOALS. This conceptual metaphor also belongs to the cyclical image schema. We will see in the next chapter how these metaphors interact with the events of the funeral games and the cultural poetics of chariot racing. In the way of conclusion, it should be said that the reference to τέρματα (Il. 22.162), which is implicitly compared to the walls of Troy within a simile, appears to indicate that similes can reflect conceptual metaphors in the form of poetic lexical comparisons. This has much to recommend W.C. Scott’s notion of the “similime” as an abstract conceptual category that categorizes “families” of similes, even if we might instead simply refer to this cognitive phenomenon as conceptual metaphor. However, this does not mean that simile and metaphor are the same.

Simile and Metaphor

The previous discussion raises the related question of the linguistic or lexical relationship between metaphor and simile in Homeric poetry. There has been important work on the various

---

98 For Herodotus’ description of the τρόπαιον at Marathon (490 BCE) and its relationship to historical reconstructions of the battlefield, see Fromherz 2011. For the τρόπαιον as an act of memory, see De Vivo 2014.

99 Scott 2009, 18–41.
poetic and narrative functions of simile, and the following linguistic account will hopefully complement them. As discussed in the introduction (pg. viii, with n.18), there are pragmatic differences between simile and metaphor. Barnden (2012, 31) building off of Utsumi 2007, 2011, posits that similes tend towards lower Interpretative Diversity (ID), or semantic richness, than be-form metaphors do, because similes preserve the system of connections (analogy or similarity) between target and source better than be-metaphors. This relationship, following Richards’ terminology, is typically known as the “ground,” but Barnden terms this “mediator,” and its preservation “mediator-carefulness.” Furthermore, “simile tends to lead to greater preservation of the target/source relationship (the mediacy) in the metaphorical meaning and in cognitive activation than be-form metaphor does.” In the comparison model of metaphor and simile, the mediacy and the mediator are the same thing, and in the categorization model, the mediacy is the overarching relationship that categorizes both target and source. This seems to indicate that the explicit term of comparison, “like,” or “as” causes interpreters to be more careful in the evaluation of the relationship between target and source.

Barnden’s account is entirely synchronic, and therefore can inform our reading of a given hypothetical reading or performance of Homer, yet a diachronic application of this model is perhaps more interesting for a study of Homeric poetics. What this model indicates, in short, is that similes


201 Barnden 2012, 38.

202 Barnden, 2012, 27, “This careless tendency in be-form metaphor does not contradict intuitions about such metaphor being more emphatic or shocking than simile (at least in novel cases) because of more directly juxtaposing source and target. Emphasis might place more pressure on the understander to come up with some understanding, but it does not of itself imply a high quality-level for the mediator or for understanding. While one effect of emphasis might be to make the understander more interested and therefore apply more care, an opposite effect could even be to encourage quick, ill-considered understanding. But relative carelessness is merely an overall tendency of metaphor: a sufficiently novel metaphor could well be a case where there is high carefulness because of causing increased interest.”
resist, and potentially prevent, semantic change more than metaphors do. Metaphor, in fact, is a commonly acknowledged source of synchronic lexical polysemy. Therefore the relationship between the two would be complementary, as we saw above in the example of the conceptual metaphor of death catching a warrior who was caught by his killer. Furthermore, extended similes, or “epic” similes, can act as lexical glosses.

An example involving a thought-experiment should make this point relatively clear: if one says “Life is a journey,” the two nouns involved are sufficiently distinct to a speaker of English in the 21st century to allow an emic evaluation of this statement a lexical “metaphor,” and indeed this is a paradigm-example in cognitive linguistics of a conceptual metaphor. We have encyclopedic knowledge of both terms, and the metaphor is relatively easy to interpret, with target and source having distinct semantic associations. We know how to use each word in a sentence separate from the other. Imagine for a moment if the sentence, referring to one’s life, “My journey has been difficult,” became such a standard way of talking about one’s life experience that “journey” became polysemous, synonymous with not only “voyage” but also with “life.” In this case, “life is a journey” would be a tautology.

If, on the other hand, “journey” were replaced over time with “trip,” to the extent that “journey” became increasingly archaic and eventually fell out of the general use in the language, “life is a journey” would be incomprehensible, equivalent to “life is a X” to speakers who no longer were familiar with the word “journey.” An example of this would be “life is a progress.”

---


Provided that the comparison, or simile, “life is like a journey” exists alongside the metaphor “life is a journey” in the wide-spread cultural knowledge of English speakers, the chance of “life is a journey” becoming a tautology is minimal. The “like” implies a basic difference. If the simile in this case exists in a rather elaborate form, “Life is like a journey; it can be circuitous and arduous, but one must keep going,” the chance of “journey” becoming semantically opaque is similarly minimal. In essence, simile alongside metaphor guards against semantic change, and the two dynamically interact. If a reader were tasked to explain or elaborate upon “life is a journey,” she might appeal to the simile expressed a few lines above. This, I propose, is the synchronic relationship between simile and “lexical” metaphor in the Homeric poems, and simile’s ability to preserve meaning diachronically is precisely why scholars have felt that there are more similes than metaphors in Homer; we can notice them better. One might also speculate that as a Homeric poet, combining similes and metaphors in systems of meaning would lead to consistent intelligibility of the latter on the part of the audience (and performer), while the epic simile would be a way of artistically expanding what could exist in metaphorical form with much less risk of semantic loss. The simile then, would be diachronically “productive.” An example from Homer should make the point clearer.

The meanings of Homeric φρίξ and its derived verb, φρίσσω, are confusing, since they are variously applied to humans (including battalions), wild boars, wind, and water. It is tempting to

---

translate them as “bristling” or “to bristle,” yet as seen long ago, a simile in book 7 of the *Iliad* appears to represent a very specific range of the words’ meaning:206

...τῶν δὲ στίχες εἵατο πυκναὶ ἀσπίσι καὶ κορύθεσι καὶ ἐγχεσι πεφρικυῖαι. οἶν δὲ Ζεφύροι ἐχεύατο πόντον ἐπὶ φρίξ ὀρνυμένοι νέον, μελάνει δὲ τε πόντος ὑπ’ αὐτῆς, τοῖαι ἀρα στίχες εἵατ’ Ἀχαιών τε Τρώων τε ἐν πεδίῳ.  
*Iliad* 7.61–66

And the ranks of these men sat dense squalling with shields and helmets and spears. And as a squall of Zephyr, newly roused, is poured upon the sea, and the sea below it darkens, So the ranks sat of the Achaeans and Trojans on the plain...

This simile, whenever it was composed within the history of the Homeric poems, serves as a gloss, indicating that φρίξ and related words refer to the squalling movement of wind, as a “literal” or “conventional” usage.207 I am not sure that it is justifiable to make the claim that every usage of these words in the Homeric poems must conform to this lexical semantic profile, but within the confines of this simile, it seems relatively transparent. The similes of *Iliad* 22 can inform our understanding of the metaphors introduced in *Iliad* 23, revealing the poetics of the chase and the race of Homeric composition, yet similes are crucially different from metaphors. In terms of remaining transparent

---

206 See Stanford 1936, 140–2. Stanford’s methodology is outdated by modern standards, but his observation was important, despite his insistence on literal meaning and his Unitarian outlook.

207 The participle πεφρικυῖαι, referring to the soldiers, is ambiguous in terms of its emic “figurativeness”; by translating it as “squalling,” I give it figurative flavor in the English, but it could be closer “rippling” or “shuddering.”
from a diachronic perspective, this is precisely what simile can do that metaphor cannot. In turning to the funeral games of *Iliad* 23, we will see the full complexity of Homeric metaphor.
Chapter 4: The Chariot Race and Metaphors of the *Iliad*

...  
But what if I fail of my purpose here?  
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,  
   To dry one’s eyes and laugh at a fall,  
And baffled, get up to begin again,—  
So the chase takes up one’s life, that’s all.  
...  

The previous chapter outlined how the turning post of the chariot race in the *Iliad* reveals the poetics of turning points in the Iliadic battle narrative, in which troops and individual heroes retreat, or turn, around spatial markers on the Trojan plain. The ultimate turning point of the Trojan war is the city of Troy itself, which the Greeks must reach and destroy before making their return over the sea. I theorized that the spatial marker of a turning point was a poetic mnemotechnique that finds its narrative instantiation in Nestor’s description of the actual turning post of the chariot race. The contained space of the games, stretching from the ships to the turning post of the chariot race, represents a further microcosm of the space between the Achaean camp and the exterior point of Troy and its walls. Therefore, Achilles’ establishment of the funeral games’ spatial boundaries reflects the same process as a poet’s implementation of a memory palace of markers between the camp of the Achaeans and the walls of Troy. In this case, the games are a microcosmic and delineated representation of larger mental constructions of epic poetry.

In conceptual metaphorical terms, the mapping is between the target domain of (TROOP) MOVEMENT and the source domain of (CHARIOT) RACE.\(^{208}\) This conceptual metaphor allows

\(^{208}\) This of course can be analyzed in terms of schematic constituents, such as the source-path-goal complex image schema variously involving the Greeks approaching Troy and the Trojans approaching the Greek camp, but further desconstruction of the metaphor using a blending approach, for example, I think would add confusion.
the Iliadic poet(s) to narrate the progressive movements of the Achaeans towards the walls of Troy and
the Trojans towards the ships in the Greek camp. I will argue below that the narrative events of the
chariot race indicate that the Iliadic tradition was aware of the conceptual metaphor of the chariot race,
and that this metaphor is applicable not only to the turning movements of troops on the Trojan plain,
but even to the conception of the so-called “Epic Cycle.” Moreover, the foot race will indicate that
events of the Trojan saga were conceptualized more generally as a race. This potentially provides
evidence that the Homeric tradition, or at least the Iliad, not only referenced what we conceptualize
extra-Homeric Cyclic epics, but thought of itself as a part of continuum of stories known as the Cycle.
From a methodological perspective, I conceptualize the fabulae of the Trojan saga to exist in variable and
oral form in the archaic period, and remain agnostic about what the form of these stories would be in
comparison to those found in the textualized versions of the Cypria, Aethiopis, Little Iliad, Iliou
Persis, and Nostoi.

Metaphors of Space and Poetics of Proximity

In the organization of the race, the racers are introduced in order of their horsemanship and
the quality of their horses. Eumelus is introduced first, recalling his appearance in the catalogue in

---

209 First attested as ἐπικὸς κύκλος in Athen. 7.277e. The term κύκλος with reference to epic poetry is first recorded in Arist.
Soph. El. 171a7 and An. Post. 77b32. I will not argue that it was the emic term in the archaic period, but that the
metaphorical concept of the Trojan saga as a “loop,” with all of its attendant polysemy is likely a very old notion. On the
polysemy of the κύκλος, see Fantuzzi, Tsagalis 2015. For the κύκλος specifically as chariot wheel, see Nagy 1999, 297–300, for
a conceptual elaboration of the data in Schmitt 1967, 296–8.

210 I follow the cautious methodology of Burgess 2009, 27–30. For arguments against the inaccurate distinction between the
Cycle and Homeric poetry in the archaic period, see Burgess 2001, 157–71 and the more in-depth Nagy 2010. See also the
thoughtful discussions in Burgess 2015; Nagy 2015; Foley, Arft 2015.
book 2 where he was similarly marked out for his excellent horses; second is Diomedes, whose horses were looted from Aeneas, whom Apollo saved (Apollo’s potential memory of this event resurfaces during the race); third, we have Menelaus, who has yoked, along with his own steed Podargus, Agamemnon’s mare Aithe, for whom we are given a background story: Echepolus gave her to Agamemnon as a way of buying himself out of the war; fourth, Nestor’s son Antilochus uses his father’s horses, and is the recipient of a pep-talk to which we will return later; fifth, Meriones is announced, in a somewhat perfunctory way. Achilles shakes the lots for the race-order, πάλλει ΄Αχιλλεύς… (Il. 23.350), and the collocation of Achilles’ name with a verbal form of πάλλειν “to shake” only appears elsewhere in the *Iliad* when referring to Achilles’ unique ability to wield Peleus’ ash spear, ἄλοκα μὲν αῖός ἐπιστάτο πῆλαι ΄Αχιλλεύς (Il. 16.142 = Il. 19.389). This seems to be a winking acknowledgement that this shaking of lots will be the most strenuous physical activity that Achilles will undertake during the games. The lots fall out in the following order: (1) Antilochus, (2) Eumelus, (3) Menelaus, (4) Meriones, and (5) Diomedes.212

**Racing for Nostos in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey***

---

211 Eumelus is mentioned first at *Il. 2.711–15* with his contingent of ships, then again at *Il. 2.763–7* in reference to the superiority of his horses. Ps-Apoll. *Epit.* 5.5 records that Eumelus won the chariot race at the funeral games of Achilles, but Quintus’ portrayal of the race in book 4.500ff is fragmentary. As the grandson of Pelias, renowned for his funeral games as found on the Cypselus chest and in Stesichorus’ *Ἄθλα ἐμί Πελιά*, Eumelus might have a more complex association with racing at funerals. In a somewhat cryptic statement, Lord (1971, 195) says “The funeral games themselves parallel the wedding games in the Yugoslav songs. Patroclus’ death is the false death of the hero [i.e. Achilles, ASWF].”

212 Eumelus is the first to rise in response to the competition’s announcement. Reece 1995, 216, “Just as in the Odyssean trial of the bow, Leodes, son of Oenops, the first to rise up to make an attempt, is the last to be slaughtered by Odysseus, so in the Iliadic chariot race, Eumelus, son of Admetus, the first to rise up to join the contest, is the last to arrive at the finish line.”
In the previous chapter, I discussed how a simile comparing Hector and Achilles to horses racing around the turning post of a race implicitly compared Troy to this turning post:

\[\text{ὡς δ᾽ ὑπὸ ἀεθλοφόροι περὶ τέρματα μάλιστα ἴπποι ἄλφα καὶ τρισεκατάληπτος ἣ τῷ τρίς Πριάμου πόλιν πέρι δινηθήτην καρπαλίμοις πόδεσσι θεοὶ δ᾽ ἐς πάντες ὅρῳ.}
\textit{Il. 22.162–6}

As when prize-winning, single-hoofed horses around the turning posts, run especially quickly, and a great prize awaits, either a tripod or a woman when a man has died, so those two men three times whirled around the city of Priam with swift feet. And all the gods were watching them.

Moreover, this comparison of the heroes to race horses occurs earlier in book 22 in reference to Achilles’ speeding over the plain of Troy:

\[\text{Ὢς εἰπὼν προτὶ ἄστυ μέγα φρονέων ἐβεβήκει, σευάμενος ὥς θ᾽ ἵππος ἀεθλοφόρος σὺν ὄχεσφιν, ὥς τε τρεῖς Πριάμου πόλιν πέρι δινηθήτην καρπαλίμοις πόδεσσι θεοὶ δ᾽ ἐς πάντες ὅρῳ.}
\textit{Il. 22.21–4}

Upon speaking he, with great purpose, departed toward the city, rushing as a prize-winning horse with its chariot, who easily runs at full stride over the plain; so Achilles swiftly drove his feet and knees.

It is unclear here if the horse is racing towards the turning post or the finish line of the race, but perhaps this ambiguity is only answered during the similes later in the same book, when it becomes explicit that Hector and Achilles are like horses running around the turning post of Troy. These
similes, in turn, recall a metaphor spoken by Clytemnestra in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* mapping the
nostos from Troy onto a *diaulos*:

\[
\text{δεὶ γὰρ πρὸς οἴκους νοστίμου σωτηρίας}
\text{κάμψαι διαύλου θάτερον καλὸν πάλιν.}
\]

Aesch. *Ag.* 343–4

So it is necessary to round the other leg of the race
for the salvation of returning home.

If the journey to and from Troy is a metaphorical *diaulos* in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, and Troy is
compared to a turning post in the *Iliad* itself, does this have any implications for the characterization
of the races in the funerals? I will argue below that these races are metaphors for return.

The finishing order of the competitors in the chariot race is (1) Diomedes, (2) Antilochus, (3) Menelaus, (4) Meriones, and (5) Eumelus. Exceptional events during the race caused Menelaus and
Antilochus to reverse their expected finishing orders, and Athena’s intervention caused the crash of
Eumelus, allowing Diomedes to win, and Meriones to come in fourth instead of last. Cedric Whitman
suggested long ago that Diomedes’ easy race perhaps reflected the ease of his post-Iliadic nostos, and
Douglas Frame has, in addition to arguing in detail Whitman’s suggestion, further posited that
Menelaus’ actions during the race parallel those during his nostos, and that Antilochus’ race references

---

213 Frame 2009, 170–2 discusses this passage and relates it specifically to the footrace’s representation of nostos.

214 On this see also Solez 2012, which intelligently pursues the political implications of the metaphor of a chariot race, but
does not interact with Frame 2009 at all.
his premature death. If we pursue the metaphor of nostos as chariot race, the finishing orders match relatively well with those reported in the _Odyssey_. However, the order of nostoi match perfectly the order of finishers in the race when one looks at alternative nostoi traditions that exist outside of the _Odyssey_. That is, according to extra-Odyssean traditions, Diomedes returns first, Nestor, Antilochus’ father, returns second, Menelaus returns third, Meriones returns last, and Eumelus potentially does not return at all.

The narrative of the chariot race represents Antilochus as riding in Nestor’s place because of the latter’s advanced age. He uses his father’s horses, and receives a lesson in technique from his father before the start of the race. If one sees Antilochus in the chariot race as substituting for Nestor, the order of the first three competitors of the chariot race, (1) Diomedes (2) Antilochus/Nestor and (3) Menelaus, matches the order of nostoi among the Greeks who sailed together to Lesbos according to Nestor in the _Odyssey_ (Od. 3.168–285).216

Lest Antilochus’ substitution for Nestor seem like special pleading, it turns out that when a competitor uses another man’s horses, the nostoi of the driver and the horse-owner are associated.

---

215 See Whitman 1958, 263–4, and Frame 2009, 170–216 (sections 2.54–2.88): Diomedes (205–207, sections 2.79–2.81), Antilochus (207–209, sections 2.82–2.83), Menelaus (209–16, sections 2.84–2.88). Frame’s insistence (184–5, sections 2.66–2.67) that Nestor brought Diomedes home seems to be dependent on Nestor’s ‘speaking name’ as coming from a transitive verb, which is linguistically complicated.

216 According to Nestor, Menelaus had caught up to Nestor and Diomedes at Lesbos, where they were deciding how to reach the mainland (Od. 3.168–75), but stopped at Cape Sounion to bury his helmsman Phrontis who was killed by Apollo (Od. 3.278–85). According to Athena in the guise of Mentes, Menelaus was last of all the Greeks to return home (Od. 1.285–6). Menelaus sped to Maleia, where Zeus split his ships into two groups, driving some to Crete and the other five ships, including that of Menelaus, to Egypt, where he amassed great wealth (Od. 3.286–303). Nestor’s direct knowledge of the nostoi is limited to the group comprising the men who did not follow Agamemnon in staying behind at Troy to sacrifice to Athena (Od. 3.141–79). Odysseus went along with the group until Tenedos, when he turned back towards Agamemnon after a quarrel (Od. 3.162–4). Frame (2009, 181) rightly, I think, claims that this quarrel refers to the disagreement between Odysseus and Nestor, but there does not seem to be good evidence that this has anything specifically to do with Odysseus’ failure to heed Diomedes in _Iliad_ 8 when the latter calls for help in rescuing Nestor.
Diomedes uses Aeneas’ horses. According to Proclus’ summary of the *Nostoi* and to the *Odyssey*, Diomedes returns most easily, although there are complex and various traditions about his wife Aegialeia after he returns.\(^{217}\) Aeneas, of course, is the Trojan most famous for surviving the war, and is actually said in *Iliad* 20.307–8 to rule over the Trojans after the war. If any Trojan can be seen as “winning” from an Iliadic perspective, it is precisely Aeneas. There are various extra-Iliadic traditions involving Aeneas, all of which entail his survival.\(^{218}\) In short, in at least two traditions, one associated with the *Nostoi* and the one preserved in the *Odyssey*, Diomedes has an easy return, and the fastest.\(^{219}\)

The *nostoi* of Antilochus and Nestor are mutually implicated. Nestor returns home without event, but this outcome is bittersweet; he mourns his son’s death at the hands of Memnon at *Odyssey* 4.186–8. In the *fabula* of Antilochus’ death, regardless of its murky specifics (e.g. Pindar *Pythian* 6, Diomedes and Nestor in *Il. 8*), he speeds to the rescue of his father, potentially in his own chariot, and

\(^{217}\) Diomedes’ easy return in the *Odyssey* is not consistent with the version found in Mimnermus fr. 22 W (= Schol. Lycoph. *Alex. 610*) in which his wife Aegialeia is unfaithful and plots against him. For the wanderings of Diomedes, see Servius ad *Aeneid* 8.9; for his foundation of and death in Apulia, see Strabo 6.3.9.

\(^{218}\) On Aeneas’ survival in the *Iliad*, see *Il. 20.307–8*. On the various traditions involving Aeneas, see Casali 2010: one tradition involves Aeneas perhaps being taken as a captive by Neoptolemus (*Tzetzes ad Lyc. 1268*, on which see Casali 2010, 43), another his leading an escape to Mt. Ida during the fall of the city (In Proclus’ summary of the *Iliou Persis* and Soph. fr. 373 Radt, on which see Casali 2010, 42). EGM F 31.19–33: Aeneas sails to Pallene after negotiating a treaty, cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *AR* 1.46–59. EGM F 84: Hellanicus tells of how Aeneas founded Rome after travelling with Odysseus to Italy from the Molossians, cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *AR* 1.72.2. One wonders about Diomedes’ appearance in *Aeneid* 11. See Nagy 1999, 265–75 on Aeneas traditions in the *Iliad*. Furthermore, both heroes, Diomedes and Aeneas, have strong, pre-sixth century foundational traditions associated with Italy. If one were picking a Trojan to pair with Diomedes’ easy *nostos*, it would probably be Aeneas, although Helenus or Agenor would be other options.

\(^{219}\) Moreover, there is early iconographic evidence on vases from Etruria that suggests that long before Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the Etruscans themselves may have claimed Aeneas as a *protos oikistes*, and the Etruscan descent from Anatolian stock, regardless of its historical validity, seems to be an Etruscan claim of identity. Diomedes also has similar traditions that place him as a founder of Italian cities. Who knows how old these really are, but in the case of Diomedes, they seem to go back to the 7th century judging from Mimnermus fr. 22 West. However, there is no mention of his wife Aegialeia in Proclus’ summary of the *Nostoi*. 
puts himself between Nestor and Memnon. Moreover, there is a broad parallelism between Patroclus and Achilles against Antilochus and Nestor: both Patroclus and Antilochus stand in for their philoi in death.

In looking towards Menelaus’ chariot race, and his nostos, neither is disastrous, but both contain potentially fatal obstacles: the narrow in the track and Antilochus’ daring maneuver during the race, and the death of his helmsman at the hands of Apollo, combined with a storm which drives him to Egypt. Moreover, Menelaus’ nostos is famously undermined in all of the traditions we have access to. He arrives after the murder of Agamemnon, even after the vengeance of Orestes, and so cannot save or avenge his brother. In this case, the use of Agamemnon’s speedy mare alludes to the connected nostoi of the two brothers. As shown in Odyssey 4, Menelaus is heartbroken by his failure to save his brother, and his intense survivor’s guilt requires Helen’s soothing magic. Given Clytemnestra’s key role in the failure of Agamemnon’s nostos, we might also wonder at the somewhat exceptional fact that Agamemnon’s prize horse, the key to Menelaus’ race, is female.

Earlier approaches use the ordering of nostoi as presented in the Odyssey, but this presents a problem. The Odyssey puts Menelaus as the last of all the Greeks to return home after his detour in Egypt, yet Menelaus finishes third in the race. However, Proclus’ summary of the

---

220 See Proclus Chrest. 172 Severyns and Pind. Pyth. 6.28–42. On the relation of the latter to the former, see Kelly 2006, with the response of Heitsch 2008, and further support for Kelly’s critical stance in Cook 2009.

221 Frame 2009, 213–15 further connects Menelaus’ hesitancy in the chariot race to his slow nostos and his general characterization in Homeric poetry: “Had he [Menelaus] stayed with Nestor, he would have rounded this dangerous cape [Maleia] without incident. In the chariot race it is Nestor’s son Antilochus whose act of nóos Menelaus cannot match and who leaves him behind (210).”

222 In the Odyssey, according to Athena in the guise of Mentes, Menelaus was last of all the Greeks to return home (Od. 1.285–6).
Nostoi presents an order of (1) Diomedes (2) Nestor (3) Menelaus, with no indication of Menelaus’ being last of all; it suggests that he sailed after them, μεθ’ ὦς ἐκπλεύσας ὁ Μενέλαος. Even in the Odyssey, there is evidence that the fourth finisher of the chariot race, Meriones, has returned home safely. The further returns that Nestor has heard report of are those of the Myrmidons, Philoctetes, and Idomeneus and the Cretans. Of this final group, Nestor says:

πάντας δ’ Ἰδομενεὺς Κρήτην ἔσχηγαν ἐταῖρος,
οἱ φόνον ἐκ πολέμου, πάντος δὲ οἱ οὗ τιν’ ἀπηύρα
Od. 3.191–2

Idomeneus led all of his companions to Crete, who fled from war, and the sea did not snatch anyone from him.

The emphasis on Idomeneus’ successful return along with of all of his men potentially implies that Meriones had a successful nostos, since there is no record that he died at Troy, and he is placed by Quintus Smyrnaeus in the Trojan horse (Posthomerica 12.320). More importantly, there is an alternative tradition, reported by the Alexandrian scholar Zenodotus in the Odyssey scholia, that the Cretans, that is, Idomeneus and Meriones and their contingent, were the last of all the Greeks to return home, not Menelaus. The Scholia to Od. 3.313 tell us that Zenodotus had alternative readings to Odyssey 1.93: πέμψω δ’ ἐς Κρήτην τε καὶ ἐς Πύλον ἡμαθόντα... (Athena) “I will send him to Crete and to

---

223 See Proclus’ summary (Severyns 277, 5–6): Διομήδης δὲ καὶ Νέστωρ ἄναρχοντες εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν διασώζονται. μεθ’ ὦς ἐκπλεύσας ὁ Μενέλαος... On the Nostoi see Danek 2015, 355–79.

224 Perhaps it is important that Meriones is not mentioned by name in the Odyssey at all, and we have no clear report of his return, enough so that even in the narrative of the Odyssey, Odysseus is seemingly able to pattern many of the details of the Cretan lies on the life of Meriones without anyone recognizing the basis of the fabrication. Just as we have no report of Meriones’ nostos, although there is the implication that he survives along with Idomeneus, so we also have no report of Meriones’ performance in the chariot race. He starts, and he finishes, and is mentioned nowhere else.
sandy Pylos...” More importantly, there was an alternative reading to *Odyssey* 1.285, where Athena advised Telemachus to depart from Nestor’s Pylos and go next to Idomeneus, and not to Menelaus:225

κεῖθεν δ’ ἐς Κρήτην τε παρ’ Ἰδομενής κακτα, ἐς γὰρ δεύτερος ἠλθεν Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτῶν.

Od. 1.284–5.

“...from there (go) to Crete to lord Idomeneus, for he arrived last of the Achaeans wearing bronze tunics.”

Meriones’ being the final finisher in the chariot race would then be a metaphorical reflection of the tradition of the Cretan *Odyssey*, wherein the Cretans, and not Menelaus, are the last of the Greeks to return home.226 By looking at the *nóstoi* traditions outside of the *Odyssey* as we have it, we find a perfect match between the order of the first four chariot teams in the chariot race and the order of their *nóstoi*. Therefore, it seems as though the *Iliad* sides with non-Odyssean traditions of the Achaean *nóstoi*.

This brings us to our last competitor Eumelus, who is wrecked by Athena and has to carry his chariot across the finish line. According to the above theory, this would mean that Eumelus died during his *nóstos*. In turning to the *Odyssey*, there is potentially indirect evidence that Eumelus did not make it home alive. On the way to visit Menelaus, Telemachus and Peisistratus stay at the house of Diocles at Pherae (3.487–90), not at the house of Eumelus and his wife, Iphthime, who is Penelope’s sister (4.797–8). This makes a certain amount of sense if Eumelus never returned from Troy; it would potentially present similar dangers to those currently facing Penelope, which makes Athena’s creation

---

225 See Reece 1994, 166–9; Ps-Apollodorus *Epitome* 6.9–10 on Idomeneus’ return with Appendix XII in Frazer 1921 v.2, as cited by Marks 2010: Chapter 5 n.25, further citing *Aeneid* 3.121–2; 11.264–5; cf. Servius ad *Aeneid* 3.121 and 11.264.

of a phantom-Iphthime to comfort her sister’s mourning (for the potential loss of Telemachus) a choice that is heavily referential. Iphthime only appears in the *Odyssey* in this phantom-form:  

Then the grey-eyed goddess Athena planned another thing; she created a shade, and in its shape it looked like a woman, Iphthime, the daughter of great-hearted Icarius, whom Eumelus wed, while living in his home in Pherae. She sent it to the house of divine Odysseus, in order that she could stop Penelope, mourning and lamenting, from her weeping and tearful lamentation. It entered the bedchamber through the strap of the bolt, and stood above her head and spoke a word to her: “Are you sleeping, Penelope, sorrowing in your dear heart? The gods, living easily, will not let you cry and weep, since your son will still return, for he is not offensive at all to the gods.”

Her sister’s phantom gently assures Penelope that she will not lose her son; he will still return (νόστιμος). This is the only dialogue dream other than Achilles’ dream of Patroclus (*Il*. 23.62–107), but in this case, the shade brings tidings of another’s return rather than a request to be given over to the underworld. The parallel mention of the homes of Eumelus and Odysseus implicitly compares the two

---

husbands, but we hear nothing more of Eumelus other than he married Iphthime while dwelling in Pherae. Is he now absent, just as Odysseus is? When Penelope asks the shade of her sister if Odysseus is safe, her response is remarkable:

τὴν δ’ ἀπαμειβόμενον προσέφη εἴδωλον ἁμαυρόν.
“οὐ μέν τοι κεῖνόν γε διηνεκέως ἀγορεύσω,
ζώει δ’ ἢ τέθνηκε· κακὸν δ’ ἀνεμώλια βάζειν.”
ὡς εἶπον σταθμοῖο παρὰ κληίδα λιάσθη
ἐς πνοιὰς ἀνέμων· ἡ δ’ ἐξ ὕπνου ἀνόρουσε
κούρη Ἰκαρίοιο· φίλον δέ οἱ ἦτορ ἰάνθη,
ὡς οἱ ἐναργές ἐπέσσυτο νυκτὸς ἀμολγῷ.

Od. 4.835–41

The weak shade addressed her replying,
“I will not speak to you of that man, at least, straight through, whether he lives or has died: for it is wrong to speak windy things.”
Having spoken so she withdrew beyond the bolt of the door-frame, towards the blasts of the winds: and she rose from sleep, the daughter of Icarius. And her heart was warmed, that a clear dream sped to her in the gloaming.

One could follow the approach of Stephanie West (1988), and claim that [διηνεκέως ἀγορεύσω]_T2 is a “carelessly used” formula.228 Another course would be to recognize that a line reading, “I will not speak to you of that man, at least, straight through,” at the least implies that there is much to tell. There is no disavowal of knowledge, no indication that the shade is ignorant of the answer. Indeed, it is “wrong to speak windy things,” but this could be as much about whether Odysseus will live and return. Maybe he died at sea after an arduous journey, wrecked by a jealous divinity; maybe he has survived thus far, only to meet a more tragic fate. Pragmatically at least, this statement potentially rules out at least one option, that Odysseus has died at Troy.

228 Elsewhere used at Od. 7.241, 12.56.
Penelope’s response is to wake up with her heart warmed (φιλον δὲ οἱ ἦτορ ἰάνη, 4.840) at the clear dream (ἐναργὲς ὄνειρον, 4.841). Certainly this reaction could be due to the good news of Telemachus, not offset by the uncertainty of Odysseus, but it is also possible that even the shade’s refusal to elaborate on Odysseus’ fate in effect rules out one gloomy possibility. If Eumelus died before reaching his home, and this were known to the audience of the Odyssey, the traditional referentiality of the fourth book’s ending would tie the potential fate of Odysseus to that of Eumelus, but the shade’s ambiguous response would potentially provide the internal audience of Penelope with the knowledge that at the very least, Odysseus has not died at Troy.

Therefore the chariot race, in metaphorical miniature, proleptically depicts the returns of its participants. A successful finish is a successful return, and the order in which one returns depicts the relative speed and ease of the voyage. The similes of book 22 of the Iliad, combined with the finishing order of the chariot racers corresponding to the order of their nostoi, allow us to see a metaphorical mapping of the diaulos onto the events of the Trojan cycle in the minds of Homeric poets: the finish is the completion of nostos, and the dangerous turn is Troy.

Homeric Paths and the Epic Cycle

If we extend this mapping to the fourth event of the funeral games, the foot-race (Il. 23.740–97) we find that the metaphor is similarly applicable. The finishing order of the Iliadic footrace represents in microcosm the distance each competitor returns from Troy. Antilochus, finishing last in the race, famously sacrifices himself to save Nestor in the Aethiopis, dying at Troy at the hands of

229 We might also note Nestor’s involvement in the chariot race, representing nostos, as corresponding to his status as poetic narrator in Odyssey 3, where he describes the nostoi of the other Greeks. In terms of speaking names, Nestor’s name derives from the same root as nostos, *nes “to (re)turn.”
Memnon; Ajax, finishing second in the race, dies during his nostos. Odysseus, the winner, has a famously successful, if belated, nostos. The foot race metaphorically represents the space of return. During the race, Oilean Ajax is tripped by Athena and lands face-first in a pile of cow manure. This potentially is proleptic of his death during his nostos, according to Ps. Apollodorus, he is blasted by Athena’s bolt for his rape of Cassandra. Menelaus’ account of Proteus’ story indicates that Oilean Ajax died by the Gyrean rocks (Od. 4.500–1), which are located variously within the Cyclades in antiquity. Proclus in his summary of the Nostoi, on the other hand, reports that Ajax died at the Capherean rocks off the coast of Euboea. Regardless of the precise location, Ajax dies during his nostos, yet makes it closer to home than Antilochus, who dies at Troy while attempting to protect his father. However, I think the Iliad alludes to the tradition of Ajax’s death at the Capherean rocks. As mentioned above, Ajax is tripped by Athena and lands in a pile of cow manure in the final part of the race. In Alcaeus Fr. S262 Page, the vengeance of Athena is described, motivated at least in part by the crime of Ajax against Cassandra. The location of her retribution is described in terms of where the Achaeans sail, ἱσως κε παρπλέοντες Αἳγας / βαϊτέρα]σετυχον θαλάσσας· (6–7). Aegae almost certainly

230 See Hes. Th. 1011–16 on Odysseus as father of Agrius, Latinus, and Telegonus by Circe, of Nausithous and Nausinous by Calypso. Frame 2009, 208 n.109 has anticipated me in arguing that the footrace reflects elements of the nostoi.

231 ἀλλ' δὲ τῇ τὰς χειλιόν ἐπαβέβαλεν ἀδέλλον, / ἐν' Αἴας μὲν ἔλισθε θεών, ἐβλάπην γὰρ Αθήνη, / τῇ βα' βοών κέχυτ' ἐνθ' ἀποκταμένων ἐρμίκων, / σὺς ἐπὶ Πατρόκλῳ πέφηνεν πόδας ὡκύς Αχιλλεὺς· / ἐν δ' ἐνθ' βοών βοέου πλήττο στόμα τε βίνας τε· (II. 23.773–7).


233 See West 1988 ad Od. 4.500–1 for discussion and further bibliography, to which add Lloyd-Jones 1968, 138, who correctly emphasizes the antiquity of the Capherean rocks as Ajax’s place of death.
refers to a location in Euboea.\textsuperscript{234} This is consistent with the location of the Capheraean rocks mentioned in the \textit{Nostoi}. Ajax is tripped by Athena as the runners are about to finish the race (\textit{ἀλλ' ἵτε δὴ τάχ' ἐμέλλον ἐπαξιασθαι ἠθλον... Il. 23.773}). Using the metaphorical mapping of \textit{nóstos} onto \textit{diaulos}, the location of Ajax’s trip would correspond to a place close to the Greek mainland, namely Euboea. Ajax leads away his second-place prize, an ox, while still spitting out cow manure.\textsuperscript{235} However, what also appears to be relevant here is the ancient etymology of \textit{Εὔβοια}, namely “having good cows” analyzable as a feminine substantivized adjective εὖ + βου + ιη, which name may even referenced paretymologically in the passage itself, ἐν δὲ βοῦν βοέου πλήτω στόμα τε βινάς τε (\textit{Il. 23.777}), “And his mouth and nostrils were full of cow manure.”\textsuperscript{236} Therefore, Athena engineers Ajax’s death in Euboea “the land of the good cows” as well as his face-first fall into cow dung, with the latter proleptically referencing the former.

I have described how the finishing order of the three competitors tells us how far they were able to get from Troy, but there may be additional parallelism between Odysseus’ and Antilochus’ races and their \textit{nóstoi}. Athena helps Odysseus during the footrace by hastening him and is famously his guardian during the \textit{Odyssey}. Moreover, in the race he is referred to by his Odyssean epithet, πολύτλας δίος Οδυσσεύς (\textit{Il. 23.778}). If the race precisely references his return, during which he will endure much, this epithet, normally analyzed as out of place or inappropriate for the \textit{Iliad}, makes perfect sense. He has not suffered much yet in the \textit{Iliad}, but in this race that represents his \textit{nóstos}, he certainly will. We

\textsuperscript{234} See \textit{LfgrE} s.v. Αἰγαί.

\textsuperscript{235} Ajax’s trip during the race is typically regarded as comical, and as payback from his verbal abuse of Idomeneus during the chariot race, see Richardson 1993 \textit{ad ll.} 23.775–81.

\textsuperscript{236} Cf. Hes. \textit{Ep. Fr.} 296, 2–3: τὴν πρὶν Ἀβαντίδα κικλήσαν τοις αἰείν ἐόντες, /Εὔβοιαν δὲ βοάς μιν ἐπώνυμον ὁνόμαζε Ζεὺς
hear nothing of Antilochus’ actions during the events of the race at all, but after the race, Antilochus makes a speech about respecting one’s elders, and praising the “green/raw old age” of Odysseus. Is this referential? As I mentioned earlier, according to the Aethiopis, Antilochus, as a paragon of filial piety and respect for one’s elders, sacrifices himself for his elderly father, Nestor.

In fully examining the metaphor of the footrace as opposed to that of the chariot race, a more holistic view of Homeric epic is necessary. As analyzed in the previous chapter, in Homeric poetry, to sleep is “to be caught by sleep,” and to die is “to be caught (by death)” (e.g. ἡ ἂνακτάμεν ἡ ἀλώναι, Il. 12.172, ...[θανάτῳ ὄμορο ἄλωναι] P2, Il. 21.281, Od. 5.312, 24.34). This is the same language used of warriors catching one another in battle before delivering a death blow. Moreover, this is not an exotic conceptual metaphor, insofar as we personify death and disease commonly in language, “His cold finally caught up to him” or “She’s fighting a virus.” In the case of the footrace, if sleep and death are personified as “catching” people, just as warriors do, does Odysseus live the longest because he runs the fastest? That is, does Odysseus outrun death long enough to return home, and are Ajax and Antilochus simply too slow? This is an instance where the analysis of a metaphorical blend is actually appropriate. The space of the footrace represents the space of nostos, but this metaphor is blended with a second conceptual metaphor (or input) of death as a personified pursuer. This is not the journey of life, but the race against death for one’s life.

I now turn to how the metaphorical source of the chariot race manifests in Odyssey. In a recent article, Alex Purves concludes that one can use the representations of physical movement in the Iliad and Odyssey to make claims about the conceptualization of nostos. Specifically, she argues that the Iliad

\[237\] See n. 181 supra.
does not represent “overtaking,” namely, one person does not ever catch someone else, while the
*Odyssey* consistently represents the physical act of overtaking. Despite my disagreements with her
analysis, to be made clearer below, her fundamental point is insightful, and her examples are
compelling. Odysseus characterizes himself as slow during the competition with the Phaeacians:

“...οἱ δείδοικα ποσὶν μὴ τίς με παρέλθῃ
Φαιήκων· λίην γὰρ ἀεικέλιος ἐδαμάσθην
κύμασιν ἐν πολλοῖς’, ἐπεὶ σὺ κομιδὴ κατὰ νῆα
ἡν ἐπησανός· τῶ μοι φίλα γυῖὰ λέλυνται.”
*Od. 8.230–3*

I am afraid lest someone of the Phaeacians surpass me
only in the footrace: For I have been greatly and disgracefully subdued
among the many waves, since there was not constant (self-)care on the ship.
Therefore my dear limbs are slack.

His uncontrolled wanderings, and the involuntary movement on the sea, have sapped him of the speed
that allowed him to win the foot-race in the funeral games of Patroclus. He here occupies the role of
Nestor, but instead of listing the sole event lost at a previous funeral games, as in the case of Nestor and
the games of Amaranceus, Odysseus lists contests that he is confident that he will win, followed by one
that he is less sure of (*Od. 8.202–32*). The length of this self-referential speech is Nestorian; the
difference of course is that Odysseus has just won the discus contest in an impressive and revelatory
display of strength (*Od. 8.186–98*). This is instructive, insofar as the *Odyssey* regularly represents the
latent superiority of the elder Odysseus even in acts of physicality that the *Iliad*’s Nestor concludes
have long abandoned him in his old age. As Purves points out, one might also think of how the second song of Demodocus emphasizes that the slowest god, lame Hephaestus, is able to catch swift Ares by artifice at Od. 8.266–367. Odysseus also wins “by coming in last,” in the characterization of Elpenor at Od. 11.33–8, and in being the last out of Polyphemus’ cave at Od. 9.444–52. Odysseus throughout his speech to the Phaeacians specifically says that he would not want to compete with earlier men (ἀνδράσι δὲ προτέροισιν ἐριζέμεν σὺν ἑθελήσω, 8.233). We might see in this statement not just Odysseus’ ethics of competition, which will emerge in the grievous outcome for the suitors who revel in competing with and disrespecting their elder, but also the Odyssey’s, insofar as it claims not to compete with the stories that are narratively prior to it in the Trojan cycle. And indeed, in one specific way it seems not to. If the Iliad is the epic of speed and of narrative telos, the Odyssey is one of intricate, recursive loops, a series of spatial and narrative nostoi condensed into one. Slowness and distance are its weapons, and it denies that speed is the key to victory. Slow and steady wins the race, and the longer the race, the better.

In Homeric poetics, as I have argued, one’s nostos is conceptualized as a chariot race, and one’s life, and survival, are conceptualized as a dianulos, or a footrace. Where I differ from Purves, who seeks to make a hard distinction between the Iliad and Odyssey, is that it seems more probable to me that

---

238 On the tensions between age and speed, see Purves 2011, 535–9.

239 Levaniouk 2012, 105 cites a red-figure Attic stamnos (Beazley 5343, ~480 BCE) that shows both Idomeneus and Odysseus hanging from beneath Polyphemus’ sheep. Idomeneus is in the front.

240 On the Odyssey’s awareness of and integration of previous travel narratives into a poetics of belatedness in books 9–12, see Burgess 2012.

241 After all, the Odyssey begins in the middle, and the narrative middle sees Odysseus reaching Ithaca, the end only comes when Odysseus attains his earlier identity. On the complex ‘helix’ structure of the Odyssey, see Barker and Christensen 2014b, engaging with the structural study of Cook 2014.
these conceptual metaphors inform both epics. By necessity, there are no winners in the plot of the
Iliad, because no hero makes it home within the narrative, and even the possibility of poetry describing
a nostos exists only outside of the Iliad’s plot. This explains the indeterminacy of movement in the
Iliad: Achilles cannot catch Hector without divine intervention. Overtaking is impossible, and the race
can never be won, either on foot or by chariot. The only exception to this is in the funeral games,
where for a moment outside of the war there can be winners, and even losers at worst suffer non-fatal
injury and temporary humiliation. Glory, or kleos, in the Iliad comes only with poetic
memorialization, which is coterminous with death in battle. Death looms, and chases; it can catch and
even cover, but it unites every mortal in its closural telos.

To return to the racing metaphor, in the Iliad, the best one can do is finish alongside one’s
competitors with a noble death in battle. The Odyssey, therefore, presupposes the system laid out in
the Iliad’s funeral games, yet inverts the metaphorical poetics of racing. Diomedes, although he
returned home first, does not actually “win.” Nestor has lost his son; Menelaus is still heartbroken.
Coming in last is a triumph, and Odysseus, as the final finisher in the race of nostoi, actually comes in
“first” in terms of the poetic fame of his journey.242 The Odyssey, in effect, rewrites the rules of the
race.

---

242 Purves (2011, 548 n.72) claims, “The fact that Odysseus appears prominently as an overtaker in the battle scenes of the
Iliad only in the Doloneia fits with the prevailing scholarly opinion that Book 10 is late in date and an awkward fit with the
rest of the poem (cf. Hainsworth 1993, 151–55).” The second in no way follows from the first. Firstly, I think it is a strain on
the Greek to interpret Odysseus as an overtaker during the Doloneia. Purves (540) gives too little credit to Diomedes and
Athena, and I think mischaracterizes Odysseus. When Diomedes chases Dolon according to Odysseus’ advice, Athena
intervenes to help him (Iliad 5 during his aristeia, and as she does during the chariot race in Iliad
23. There is no indication that Odysseus could have caught Dolon by himself. Furthermore, the fact that there is an
“overtaking” at all in this episode, by Diomedes, rather predicts according to the scheme above that the return to the ships
in Iliad 10 after the raid should be characterized as completing a nostos along the lines of the Odyssey, which in fact it is,
explicitly, by Odysseus himself: νόστου δὴ μην ἔχῃ μεγαθύμου Τυδέος νῦ (Iliad 10.509), “Remember, your return, son of great-
hearted Tydeus.” Athena’s role in the Doloneia further recalls her positive agency in the nostos of Odysseus, and perhaps
In book 13 of the *Odyssey*, as Odysseus approaches Ithaca by ship, his Phaeacian vessel is compared in a simile to a four-horsed racing chariot:

When they leaned forward and were tossing up the sea with their oar-blades, even upon that man’s eyelids did sleep fall, sound, the sweetest kind, most similar to death. And just as male horses, yoked in four on the plain, all together after being struck by the blows of the whip, quickly make their way while rising upwards, so did the stern of the ship rise up, and a rippling wave behind it rushed greatly, of the much-resounding sea. But the ship was running especially surely, steadily, not even a raptor, a falcon could keep pace, quickest of fliers: so the ship quickly rushing cut the waves of the sea, bearing a man who had counsels similar to the gods, who earlier had suffered especially many woes throughout his heart, piercing both wars of men and the terrible waves. Indeed then he was sleeping placidly, forgetful of what he had suffered. When a star, the brightest one, hangs above, which especially

her negative agency in the *nostoi* of others. See Dué, Ebbott 2010 *ad Il.* 10.211–12, 10.247 and 10.509. For concise defenses of the ‘authenticity’ of the *Doloneia* from the standpoint of oral poetics, see Dué 2012; Bierl 2012.
comes as a messenger of early-born dawn’s light, then the sea-faring ship approached the island.

The ship that finally brings Odysseus’ return is compared to a racing-chariot, thereby inverting the metaphor of chariot race as nostos. Moreover, the ship, for all its speed, runs especially steadily (μάλ’ ἀσφαλέως, 13.86), allowing Odysseus to sleep. Ultimately, the ship’s velocity is less important than the calmness of the final leg of Odysseus’ nostos, perhaps a final indication of the Odyssey’s inverted aesthetic of racing as return. Privileging speed would be playing according to the Iliad’s rules.

I will now turn to later epic, and argue not only that this metaphor of a chariot race reflecting nostos via ship was present in Homeric poetry, but that Apollonius Rhodius inverted this, and presents a nostos on a ship (the Argo) as a chariot race. Apollonius, moreover, can be shown to be engaging specifically with the funeral games of Patroclus via close intertext.

There is no central episode of funeral games in Apollonius’ Argonautica, but funeral games run throughout the first half of the epic, and ‘games’ continue throughout the second half. After the mistaken battle with the Doliones and the death of king Cyzicus, funeral games are held (Arg. 1.1057–62); next, there is a proleptic reference to Heracles’ revenge on the sons of Boreas as they return from Pelias’ funeral games (Arg. 1.1304–8); in Book 2, Lycus, leader of the Mariandynoi, reminisces about Heracles’ dominant participation in boxing at his brother’s funeral games (Arg. 2.780–5), an instance of analepsis. Heracles’ domination of physical competition features throughout the epic, and frames events before and after the plot contained within it. Moreover, several pseudo-athletic events in the Argonautica match the contests in the Homeric games. First, there is the competition in rowing between the Argonauts:

ἐνθ’ ἐρις ἄνδρα ἱκαστον ἀριστήων ὑφόθυνεν,
δς τις ἀπολλήζει πανύστατος ἀμφὶ γὰρ αἰθήρ.
Thence contesting stirred up each of the best men, who would quit last; for all around them the windless air smoothed the whirlpools, and put the sea to sleep. But confident in the calm sea they drove the ship forwards by force, not even could Poseidon’s storm-footed horses have overtaken it, darting through the sea.

And just as when a swell is stirred up by raging winds, which newly hang in the air from rivers at evening, they were taking a rest worn out by toil. But Heracles was pulling along those tired men all together by the force of his hands, and made the fitted timbers of the ship quiver.

Richard Hunter has identified the competition in rowing in book 1 as the closest episode in the *Argonautica* to Homeric narratives of athletic competition, and compares this rowing competition both to the chariot race of *Iliad* 23 as well as the ship race of *Aeneid* 5. What is notable about this rowing competition is that Heracles’ vast prowess threatens to destroy the Argo itself, as the beams creak under the force of his efforts. The only thing that saves the ship is that his oar breaks, and the breaking of the oar precedes the kidnapping of Hylus and Heracles’ elimination from the narrative. His ability to compete, and his larger involvement in the narrative end at the roughly same time.

The danger inherent in Heracles is consistent with the wider tone of the *Argonautica*, in which his semi-divine character threatens to overshadow the entire epic, both in terms of his own physical
prowess and the extent of his twelve labors. One can see the figure of Heracles as representing an
Apollonian poetics of belatedness, insofar as he represents both the futility, and even the danger, of
competing with one’s predecessors and/or greaters. According to Pindar’s ninth Olymptian,
Archilochus performed a καλλίνικε song to Heracles at the Olympic games, potentially indicating a
long tradition of associating Heracles with victory in formalized Hellenic athletic competitions,
frequently aetiologized, in both the ancient and modern worlds, as funeral games. That Heracles
was also the patron divinity of the Alexandrian gymnasium under the Ptolemies might explain an
aspect of this characterization in more local socio-historical terms.

There are several events in the narrative that can be seen as refractions of athletic competitions,
specifically those in the Iliadic funeral games: the boxing between Amycus and Polydeuces (Arg. 2.1–
153); Zetes and Calaes race after the harpies (Arg. 2.262–90); Jason “wrestles” the fire-breathing bulls
(Arg. 3.1306–13); his fight with the Earthborn (Arg. 3.1354–1407) is a complex combination of the
footrace, the armed duel, and the iron throw of the Iliadic funeral games; and there is furthermore a

244 Phlegon of Tralles (FGH 257 F 8—9): θῆκε δ' ἐπιτετα ἔροτον καὶ ἐπαθὲλα ἑαὐτὸν / Ολυμπάω, “then he [Pelops] established a
festival and contests for prizes in honor of the dead Oenomaus”. Ibid. 9—11: τρίτατος δ' ἐπι τοῖς παῖς Ἄμφιτρυωνος / Ἡρακλῆς ἐτέλεσσ' ἔροτον καὶ ἀγώνα ἐπὶ μήτρῳ / Ἡπατελὴς Πέλος σφινεόντας "and third after them Herakles son of
Amphitryon established the festival and the competition in honor of his maternal relative, the dead Pelops, son of
Tantalus”. Pythian games founded by Amphiktiones for Python’s death at the hands of Apollo, ἐπὶ τῷ Πύθωνος φόνῳ
(Aristotle F 637.16); Isthmian games founded by Sisyphus for the death of Melikertes/Palaimon (Pausanias 2.1.3); Nemean
games founded by the Seven due to the death of Archemorus/Opheltes by snakebite (Bacchylides 9.12). See Roller 1981a,
107 n.5; Nagy 1990, 119–29, and Nagy 2015 in Classics@13. For a modern aetiology, see Meuli 1975 [1941], which argues that
combat sports began as funeral games to appease the dead.

245 In looking a bit more closely at the physical contest involving the Boreads, we find that when Zetes and Calaes return
from their pursuit of the Harpies, the Islands from which they return change their name to the “Strophades,” or the
“turning islands.” Is this itself a commentary on the Islands serving as a “turning post” in the race between the Boreads and
the Harpies, with the geographical marker of the turning post, the islands themselves, being renamed in honor of the this
legendary pseudo-athletic competition?

246 See Lovatt 2005, 201.
compressed reference to the final two events of the Iliadic games in book 4, τοὺς δ’ εἰδρεν παρὰ νηὶ σόλῳ ῥήμασι τ’ διστῶν / περιμένους... (Arg. 4.851–2).\footnote{See Nelis 2001, 199, with bibliography in n.57.} Finally, the Argonautica ends with two aetiologies for peaceful competitions: verbal abuse between men and women on Anaphe (Arg. 4.1725–30), and racing with amphorae on Aegina (Arg. 4.1765–72), which represents the Amphiphorites/Aiakeia a festival current to the time of Apollonius that celebrated the Argonauts/Aeacids (schol. ad Pind. Ol. 7.156).\footnote{On the latter, see Polinskaya 2013, 142–7. These peaceful competitions are comparable to the dancing and singing in the Homeric Phaeacian games, and the Aeneid’s Lusus Troiae.} In light of the mention of funeral games and (pseudo-)athletic contests in the Argonautica, one also might wonder at Apollonius’ ubiquitous use of ἄθλος/-οι (34x), referring variously to games that occur within the narrative, struggles of the voyage, and to the narrative of the voyage itself. This polysemy will be familiar from Gk. ἀγών.\footnote{The metaphor of athletic competition for poetic competition is also present in the earliest Sanskrit text, the Rigveda, in its use of samara and, if one looks closely, vidatha, both used for gatherings and competitions of all kinds, including physical and poetic. P. Oktor Skjærvø (2008, 300–302) has outlined how the metaphor of a chariot race for poetic performance is operative in the Avestan Gathas (YH. 41.4, 1.30.10).}

Jason, up until the prophecy of Phineus, expects the Argonautic journey to start and end at Pagasae (along the same route) with the turning point of Colchis.\footnote{This is the route preferred by Herodotus, Dionysius Scytobrachion, and Callimachus, see scholium ad Arg. 4.282–91b. See also Clare 2002, 74–83. See especially Endsjø 2011 on the geography of the voyage.} The middle then, is Colchis, but Jason is concerned with what he assumes will be a symmetrical voyage to and from Aeetes, and expects that the king will hand over the fleece without incident, or will task the Argonauts with subduing a local enemy. He says to Phineus:

“ὦ γέρον, ἥδη μὲν τε δίκες πείρατ’ ἄθλων ναυτιλίας καὶ τέχνας, ἐτῶστω συνεργάσα διὰ πέτρας πειθόμενοι Πόντον ἐπερήσαμεν· εἶ δὲ κεν αὐτίς...”
τάσθ’ ἤμιν προφυγοῦσιν ἐς Ἑλλάδα νόστος ὀπίσσω εἴσεται, ἀσπαστῶς κε παρὰ σέο καὶ τὸ δαἰεῖν. πῶς ἔρθω, πῶς αὖτε τόσην ἀλός εἰμι κέλευθον, νῆς ἐὼν ἔταρος ᾧμα νῆσιν; Αἴα δὲ Κολχίς Πόντου καὶ γαίς ἐπικέκλιται ἐσχατίζειν.” ὡς φάτο· τὸν δ’ ὁ γεραιός ἀμειβόμενος προσέειπεν· “ὅ τέκος, εὖτ’ ἄν πρώτα φύγῃς ἐλοάς διὰ πέτρας, θάρσει· ἐπεὶ δαίμων ἑτέρων πλόον ἡγεμονεύσει ἐξ Ἁἰνης, μετὰ δ’. Αἴαν ἄλιε πομπῆς ἐσόνται.”

Arg. 2.411–22

“Oh old man, you have already gone through the limits of our seafaring trials, and the sign, trusting in which we may pass through the horrifying rocks to Pontus; I would happily learn also this from you, whether we, escaping past these rocks again, will have a return back to Hellas. How shall I do it, how will I travel again such a great path of the sea, being inexPERIENCED TOGETHER WITH MY INEXPERIENCED COMPANIONS? Colchian Aea lies on the borders of Pontus and earth.”

So he spoke, and the old man answering addressed him, “Oh child, as soon as you escape through these destructive rocks, take heart; for a divinity will lead you through another voyage from Aea, and after Aea there will be guides enough.”

Here, Jason is expecting the journey that an external audience would have anticipated based on previous treatments of the Argonautica, and the prophet Phineus corrects him, telling him the voyage back to Greece will not be a mirror image of the voyage to Colchis. The events of Argonautica books 1 and 2 are relatively according to plan, yet book 3 is full of unforeseen challenges for Jason. Moreover, the geographical scope of book 4 is immense, and unlike anything Jason could have expected, or, on the basis of earlier tellings of the Argonautica, presumably anything the audience could have expected.251 A further issue with the huge extension of geography in Argonautica book 4 is that if the

251 On the complexities of the homeward trip in the Argonautica, see Claire 2002, 119–72.
trips to and from Colchis are not parallel, the “middle” or the “turning point” of the voyage becomes increasingly unclear. Is the turning point Colchis? Or is it instead Aeaea, itself a doubling of Aea both phonetically and in terms of its inhabitant, Circe, sister of Aeetes? Is the geographical middle or turning point of the Argonauts’ voyage actually Libya, corresponding roughly to the Aeneid’s Carthage? The nostos, is in effect, extended indefinitely, and without a plan corresponding to Phineus’ prophecy. Moreover, the path of Apollonius’ narrative and the voyage of the Argonauts are co-extensive, as one is extended, so is the other. Yet the narrative actually gives a hint at what the “turning point” in the Argonauts’ voyage could be, and relates this turning point to an athletic event that is familiar by now, the chariot race at funeral games. Apollonius chooses to characterize the traditional geographical middle of the Argonauts’ nostos with language from the turning-point of the Iliadic chariot race:

καὶ τὸν ἐπειτ’ οὖ δηρόν ἐπὶ σχῆσεσθαι ἀέθλων μέλλον, ἀτὰρ κλησίν ἐπισυγερων ἠριθέντες βίμφα μᾶλ’ ἐς πεδίον τὸ Ἀρήν ήπειγόντοι.
τόσσον δὲ ποτέρω πέλεν ἄστεος ἀντιπέρθεν,
ὅσσον τ’ ἐκ βαλλίδος ἐπήθιδος ἔρματι νύσσα
γίγνεται, ὅππότ’ ἀέθλα καταρθημένοι ἀνακτος
χηθεμόνες πεζοίς καὶ ἵππησι στίθενται.
Arg. 3.1268–74

And then not for long were they about to hold back from the contests, but having sat in a row on the benches, they were very quickly driving on towards the plain of Ares. And it was further ahead, opposite the city, as far as from the starting line a νύσσα is, to be reached by a chariot, whenever, when a leader has died, his next-of-kin establish contests for runners and horsemen.

The question is: what is a νύσσα? A chariot race always has a turning post (τέρμα [-τα]), but in Homeric poetry, νύσσα can mean not only turning post, but also the starting point for a footrace. In terms of Hellenistic racing practice, as Richard Hunter points out, the νύσσα can also be a finishing line for a chariot race if the number of lengths is odd.\(^{253}\) Apollonius’ use of νύσσα engages directly with the chariot race of *Iliad* 23. Discussed in the previous chapter, Nestor’s instructions to Antilochus contain a reference to a νύσσα:

![Greek text](image)

I will tell you an exceptionally clear sign, and it will not escape you. There stands a dry stump a fathom above the ground, either oak or pine, and not rotted away by rain, and two white stones lean against it on either side, in the joining place of the road, and there is a smooth track for horses around it. Either it is the grave-sign of some long-dead man, or was established as a racing mark by earlier men. And now swift-footed, shining Achilles made it the turning post.

Here it potentially refers to the same object as the turning post (τέρματ’, *Il*. 23.332). Moreover, the νύσσα appears during the narrative of the foot-races in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey’s* Phaeacean games:

![Greek text](image)

And they stood in a row: and Achilles marked out the turning post.

---

\(^{253}\) Hunter 1989 *ad Arg.* 3.1272.
And their race was stretched from the **racing mark**...

οἱ δὲ τοι πρῶτον μὲν ἐπειρήσαντο πόδεσιν·

τοῖς δὲ ἀπὸ νύσσης τέτατο δρόμος...

*Od. 8.120–1*

These men first made an attempt at racing. And their race was stretched from the **racing mark**...

In both of these cases, the νύσσα seems to refer to a starting line. Apollonius plays on the semantic ambiguity of νύσσα: is the plain of Ares the end of the race, the turning post that marks the return back to Greece, or is it the beginning of a new ordeal (and indeed, Jason must disembark and proceed on foot). What in effect, is the “middle” of the voyage? In the journey as a race, the Argonauts’ turn is fundamentally ambiguous. In terms of the voyage, and the trials at Aea, there are multiple turns: the whirling of Medea’s emotions,\(^{254}\) the ploughing of the field,\(^{255}\) and the coiling of the dragon.\(^{256}\) These all lead to a book (*Arg. 4*) that features a signless *periplous* of Hellenistic geography.\(^{257}\) The geography of *nostos* is characterized by an ambiguous and prolonged series of (re-)turns. As Richard Hunter (1993, 19–23) points out, the *Argonautica*’s beginning and ending demonstrate the multiple possibilities of beginning and ending a narrative, and so, I argue, it is with the middle.

Moreover, the simile in *Argonautica* 3 mirrors the simile of *Odyssey* book 13 in inverting the Iliadic metaphor. In the *Iliad*, the chariot race during the funeral games represents a *nostos* by ship, but

---

\(^{254}\) τοῖς ὑπὸ κραδίῃ έλιμένῳ αἰθέτο λάθρῃ / σόλας ἥρως, ἀπαλὰς δὲ μετετρωπᾶτο παρειᾶς / ἵς χλόον, ἄλλοτ' ἔρευνος, ἀκριβείᾳ νόοιο (*Arg. 3.296–8*).

\(^{255}\) The entire episode spans from *Arg. 3.1308–53*, but see especially Jason “often turning around” (*ἐντροπαλαμόμενος, Arg. 3.1337*) cf. Latin *versus*.

\(^{256}\) See the verbal forms and nominal derivative of ἔλοσσειν at *Arg. 4.139–45*.

\(^{257}\) See the twisting, wandering Argo (*Arg. 4.1541–7*). On the voyage’s imposition of spatio-temporal order in the *Argonautica* (and how Heracles exists outside of time and space), see Thalmann 2011, 25–51. See also Timagetas’ geography.
Apollonius compares the movement of a ship, engaged in a *nostos*, to the movement of a chariot during funeral games. What bolsters the notion of Apollonius’ close textual engagement with *Iliad* 23 is that, as Philippe Rousseau points out, Phineus’ description of the two rocks of the Symplegades that threaten to crush the Argo (*Argon. 2.317–20*) matches precisely Nestor’s description of this turning post, with two rocks that threaten to wreck one’s chariot.\(^{258}\) However, this is not to say that Homer is the only influence here.

What bears especially on Apollonius’ rendering of the *Argonautica* is Pindar’s fourth *Pythian*, in which a long digression describes the Argonautic journey.\(^{259}\) In the beginning of the ode, Pindar describes the portage of the Argo over the sands of Libya, shared with Apollonius’ version of the return-leg.\(^{260}\) What is notable here is that, just as Apollonius compares the Argo to a chariot, Medea prophesies (16–17) that when the Battidae colonize Cyrene in Libya, they will trade dolphins for horses and oars for reins. Therefore, even in Pindar’s fourth *Pythian*, there is an exchange of chariot and ship specifically associated with a return, in this case, a foundational return of the Battidae to the locale of their claimed ancestor, the Argonaut Euphamus. Whatever Apollonius’ full range of sources, Pindar is

---

\(^{258}\) See Rousseau 1992, 170–2. Phineus’ language (ἐν ξυνοχῇ [*Arg. 2.318*], ἐξαλέασθαι [*Arg. 2.319*], and ἐρήμενται [*Arg. 2.320*]) corresponds closely to Nestor’s (ἀλασθαι [II. 23.340], ἐν ξυνοχῇ [II. 23.330], ἑρημίασθαι [II. 23.329]).

\(^{259}\) When dealing with Homer, at first it seems as though there are no contemporaneous or earlier sources of different genres with which we must contend, not so for Apollonius, or even for tragedy. In terms of athletic metaphor, a generic input that looms large is precisely that of epinician poetry, which praises athletic victors. On athletic metaphors in drama and their relationship to epinician, see Steiner 2010; Kratzer 2013 with bibliography. Pindaric poetry is replete with athletic metaphor, much of it describing the craft of the poet in terms of athletic events. However, the vehicle/chariot of song is likely to be an Indo-European metaphor for poetic composition. And so with Homer, in effect, we must always deal with the uncertainties of archaic Greece, and with the pre-histories of genres which we think of as post-Homeric.

\(^{260}\) The scholia to Euripides’ *Medea* (on which see Page 1938, xxi-xxv) tell us that Eumelus of Corinth and Simonides wrote about Medea, and scholia to *Pythian* 4 (on which see Braswell 1988 *ad Pyth*. 4.253 [b]) confirms that Simonides wrote about the Argonauts’ competition on Lemnos with the fleece as prize (on the return?). Multiple scholia (eg. *ad Arg. 3.26, 4.176–7*) to the *Argonautica* reference Simonides.
clearly among them, and specifically his use of athletic metaphor. What my analysis perhaps suggests is that there is also a relationship between athletic metaphors in epinician and those of Homeric epic.

I discussed earlier the poetics of chariot/ship racing, with Heracles’ efforts threatening to destroy the Argo. Yet even in the foot-race, the Argonauts will always be second place to Heracles. He beats them to Libya, and they cannot “catch” him. Lyceus, referring to the impossibility of catching Heracles:

εἰς δὲ ἐτάρους ἀνιόν μυθήσατο, μὴ μιν ἔτι ἄλλον μαστήρα στείχοντα κιχησέμεν. οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐλθόν Εὐφημός τε πόδας ταχύς υὲ τε δοῦν Θρηκίου Βορέω, μεταμόνια μοχθήσαντες. Arg. 4.1481–4

Returning to his companions he reported that no longer would any other searcher overtake Heracles on foot. And even they arrived, Euphemus swift of foot and the two sons of Thracian Boreas, after laboring in vain.

Apollonius fragments and subverts the metaphor of voyage as race by denying the certainty of the “turning post,” and by showing that the Argonauts will always be second-place finishers to Heracles.261

In the Iliad, one’s slowness on foot was linked metaphorically to one’s death; in this vein, it may be relevant to note that the Boreads, famed most of all for their tremendous speed, not only are incapable of catching Heracles on foot during the narrative, but are actually caught by Heracles and killed as they return from the funeral games of Pelias, an event that lies far outside the narrative of Apollonius’ epic, but well within the fabula of the Argonautica (1.1304–8). This sustained textual engagement with Iliad 23, combined with Apollonius’ references to funeral games that occur before

261 On Heracles’ travels in comparison to those of the Argonauts, see Clare 2002, 88–104. On Heracles in the Homeric poems, see Barker and Christensen 2014a.
and after the narrative of the *Argonautica*, may allow one to wonder to what extent the entire epic is patterned on the cultural institution of funeral games. In this regard, one may think specifically of the funeral games that Ptolemy the First held for Alexander at Memphis as a foundational act of his empire, or perhaps even more suggestively, Arrian’s report (7.26.3) that Alexander’s last words were that he foresaw himself being the object of a great funeral competition (ἐπιτάφιον ἀγώνα). This of course would be the conflict of the successor kingdoms as a metaphorical funeral games for the great Macedonian ruler.

Although the *Argonautica* does not have an extended narrative sequence of funeral games, Virgil’s *Aeneid* certainly does, and these are the anniversary funeral games of Anchises in book 5. Servius claims that most of these were taken from the Homeric funeral games,262 but we might do better to analyze the games of *Aeneid* 5 in the more textually inclusive terms laid out by Damien Nelis, who has emphasized Virgil’s debt to Apollonius.263 Nelis demonstrates elsewhere that Aeneas’ journey from Troy to Libya corresponds to the entire Argonautic journey, starting and ending at Pagasae with its turning point of Colchis. Virgil’s Sicily corresponds to Apollonius’ Aeaea. One can represent this schematically as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
Aeneid \ 3 & \quad \text{(Troy to Libya)} = \text{Arg. 1 and 2 (Pagasae/Iolcus to Colchis).} \\
Aeneid \ 1 \ 4 & \quad \text{(Carthage and Dido)} = \text{Arg. 3 (Colchis and Medea).} \\
Aeneid \ 5-7 & \quad \text{(Carthage to Latium via Sicily)} = \text{Arg. 4 (the return to Greece via Aeaea).}
\end{align*}
\]


\[263\] Nelis (2010, 19–20) on Virgil: “Vergil works in a highly systematic way, in which he reads the *Odyssey* back onto the *Iliad* and then reads the *Argonautica* of Apollonius back onto both epics, while at the same time consulting scholia on all three works and adopting an approach to reading which then enables him to bring numerous other texts into the picture (as shown above, Euripides, Ennius, Catullus, the Roman historians, etc.).”

Moreover, as Nelis has argued, the Virgilian ship-race functions as a microcosm of the entire
*Argonautica* as well as the first six books of the *Aeneid*,\(^{265}\) with the race around the turning-point
(meta) corresponding to the turning points of the Argonauts (Colchis) and the Trojans
(Sicily/Carthage).\(^{266}\) Virgil similarly regards Sicily as the “turning post” in the race of *nostos*. He
describes the turning post of the ship-race, the first event of the funeral games, with the same terms as
Helenus describes Sicily:

\[\text{est procul in pelago saxum spumantia contra}
\]
\[\text{litora, quod tumidis summersum tunditur olim}
\]
\[\text{fluctibus, hiberni condunt ubi sidera Cauri;}
\]
\[\text{tranquillo silet immotaque attollitur unda}
\]
\[\text{campus et apricis statio gratissima mergis.}
\]
\[\text{hic viridem Aeneas frondenti ex ilice }	ext{metam}
\]
\[\text{constituit signum nautis pater, unde reverti}
\]
\[\text{scirent et longos ubi circumflectere cursus.}
\]
\[\text* Aen. 5.124–31
\]

There is a rock far off in the sea opposite the foaming shore,
which is submerged and struck by the swollen waves,
when the wintry Northwest winds bury the stars.
In calm weather it is still, and its level plain rises from the motionless wave,
a favorite post for the basking cormorants.
Here father Aeneas established a turning post,
verdant, from a leafy holm-oak, as a sign to the sailors,

---

\(^{265}\) “Two-tier allusions and intratexts: (1) Mnestheus’ exhortation (*Aen. 5.188–90*) and racing technique refers to Euphemus’ urging to avoid the Symplegades (*Arg 2.588–90*), Antilochus’ threat to his horses to overtake Menelaus at the narrow road (*Il. 23.403–16*) as well as Anchises’ earlier orders to avoid Scylla and Charybdis (*Aen. 3.558–60*). (2) Gyas’ technique, commanding his helmsman to steer as closely to the rock as possible (*Aen. 5.162–6*) refers to Phineus’ instructions to Jason after threading the Symplegades (*Arg. 2.345–8*), Nestor’s advice to Antilochus before the chariot race (*Il. 23.336–43*) and Antilochus’ different application of it (*Il. 23.426–8*), Helenus’ instructions about Scylla and Charybdis (*Aen. 3.410–13*) and Palinurus’ execution of it (*Aen. 3.561–3*). (3) Cloanthus is rewarded for his piety: he prays to Portunus and wins (*Aen. 5.239–43*), which refers to Athena’s guidance of the Argo through the Symplegades (*Arg. 2.598–600*), cf. Glauce’s aid at *Arg. 1.1399–28* and Triton’s reaction to Jason’s prayer (*4.1597–600*), as well as Athena’s lightening of Odysseus’ limbs in response to his silent prayer (*Il. 23.768–72*), cf. Ino’s compassion towards Odysseus (*Od. 5.333–53*), Odysseus’ prayer and aid by the river (*Od. 5.445–54*), expanded from Nelis 2001, 217–18.

\(^{266}\) On the complex and systematic intertextuality between the events that occur after the games in book 5 and *Argonautica 4*, see Nelis 2001, 199–209.
whence they would know to turn back, *and to bend their long paths around*.

Earlier in the *Aeneid*, Helenus recommended that the Trojans avoid Scylla and Charybdis, by travelling instead to Sicily: “It is better to circle the *turning posts* of Sicilian Pachynus, delaying, *and to bend your long paths around*…” (praestat Trinacrii *metas* lustrare Pachyni / cessantem, *longos et circumflectere cursus*... *Aen*. 3.429–30). Sicily is the “turning post” in the metaphor of voyage, or perhaps foundational *nostos*, as a chariot or ship race.

Based on the finishing order in the Iliadic races, and their reflection of *nostoi*, one might expect the finishing order of the Virgilian competitors to reflect metaphorically on their status outside of the events of the *Aeneid*. Each competitor in the ship-race serves as an aetiological founder of a Roman *gens*, and this Virgil tells us explicitly, at least in the cases of Cloanthus, Mnestheus and Sergestus.

Finishing first is Cloanthus, founder of *gens Cluentia*, second is Mnestheus, founder of *gens Memmia*, third is Gyas, founder of *gens Gegania* [according to Servius], and fourth is Sergestus, founder of *gens Sergia* (he crashes on the rock of the turning post during the race). In a 1995 article, Andrew Feldherr argues that the entire race is an extended ship of state metaphor, referencing the performative venue of Augustus’ Actian games, with the various crews representing different styles of governance. Sergestus’ tyrannical behavior during the race alludes to his descendent, Lucius Sergius Catilina.267 This seems clearly correct, but more remains to be said. When one looks at the history of the Roman *gentes* which are allegedly founded by these racers, a pattern emerges: the better one’s finish in the race, the better off one’s family is in the late Roman Republic, and presumably, in the time of Virgil:268

(1) Gens Cluentia: family of the late Republic; Lucius Cluentius fought Sulla in the Social War.

---

267 Feldherr 1995.

268 Virgil’s genealogical impulse here could be related to the lost work of Varro, *de familis Troianis*. 
If the order of Homer’s chariot race represents the speed and success of their nostoi, Virgil has taken this metaphor and applied it to social history of his Roman contemporaries. In so doing, he levels out their foundations: all of these families are founded by allies of Aeneas, and this downplays the historical status of the gens Gegania and gens Sergia by giving them the same starting-point as the historically newer gens Cluentia and gens Memmia. Moreover, the families associated with the race’s winners enjoy continued success, while the ancient patrician families have fallen into oblivion or in the case of gens Sergia, scandal and disrepute. It is implied, furthermore, that this disrepute is genetic, since Sergestus, by crashing into the rocks (furens animi, Aen. 5.202) exhibits the same kind of rash and aberrant behavior during the race as his descendent, Catiline.

The footrace in Virgil’s games can similarly be read as a metaphor, but of a very different sort. The order of finishers in the footrace during Anchises’ games is as follows: (1) Euryalus, (2) Helymus, (3) Diores, (4) Salius, and (5) Nisus. During the race, Nisus slips on the blood of a sacrificed oxen, but purposefully trips Salius so that his friend Euryalus can win the race.

In book 9, after the night raid, Euryalus is taken captive by the Italic army led by the Rutulian Volcens. They are not yet aware that he was involved in the raid, and are detaining him as a prisoner. Nisus, having already escaped, sees this from the woods and intervenes on behalf of his lover, and this intervention not only causes Volcens to kill Euryalus, but results in Nisus’ death. This is all to say that the fates of Nisus (5) and Euryalus (1) are similarly linked in the race and in the night raid of book 9, the
former proleptically referencing the latter.\textsuperscript{269} If we remove these two from the order of the race, this leaves the remaining three competitors whose finishing positions are named. Specifically, the order in which they finish reflects how long they survive in the \textit{Aeneid}. Helymus survives as the founder of the Sicilian Elymians, Diores “almost makes it” to the end of the \textit{Aeneid}; he dies in book 12, two books after Salius in book 10. In the race, the Virgilian narrator tells us that Diores would have overtaken Helymus had the race been longer (\textit{Aen.} 5.325–6). By dying at \textit{Aen.} 12.509–11, did Diores similarly “almost make it”? In the footrace of the \textit{Iliad}, one’s finishing place metaphorically reflected one’s survival after the Trojan war. If the \textit{Aeneid}’s race proleptically references death and survival in war,\textsuperscript{270} Virgil’s description of the other effaced runners in the race is chilling: \textit{multi praeterea, quos fama obscura recondit} (\textit{Aen.} 5.302).

The Referentiality of Divine Violence and Metaphors of the Turn

In light of the previous treatment of the metaphor of race as \textit{nostos}, one can see the events of the race as metaphors for events inside the plot of the \textit{Iliad}. Once the chariot race begins, Eumelus takes the lead, with Diomedes just behind him. While in the act of lashing his horses to catch Eumelus, Diomedes loses his whip due to the intervention of Apollo, who struck the shining whip from his hands” (\textit{Il.} 23.384).\textsuperscript{271} This language mirrors that of Apollo’s previous violent intervention, when he stuns Patroclus and strikes his helmet from his head, τοῦ δ’ ἄπο

\textsuperscript{269} On Nisus and Euryalus in books 5 and 9, with bibliography, see Fratantuono and Smith 2015, 340–2.

\textsuperscript{270} Aeneas to Turnus: \textit{Non cursu, saevis certandum est comminus armis} (\textit{Aen.} 12.890).

\textsuperscript{271} Scholars have seen Apollo’s antagonism here as resulting from either his patronage of Eumelus, see bT \textit{ad Il.} 23.383, or his anger at Diomedes for stealing the horses of Aeneas, see Richardson 1993, 214 and \textit{ad loc}. 

99
μὲν κρατὸς κυνέην βάλε Φοίβος Ἀπόλλων, “And Phoebus Apollo struck the helmet from his head” (Il. 16.793). Apollo’s involvement in the chariot race reenacts his actions leading to Patroclus’ death, and rehearses his allegiance to the Trojans. Athena’s response strengthens this line of reasoning. She returns Diomedes’ whip, δῶκε δὲ οἱ μάστιγα, μένος δ’ ἵππουσιν ἐνήχεν “and she gave the whip back to him, and invigorated his horses” (Il. 23.390) in the same way that she returned Achilles’ spear to him during his duel with Hector, ἄψ τ’ Ἀχιλῆι δίδου, λάθε δ’ Ἐκτόρα ποιμένα λαῶν, “and she was giving it back to Achilles, but she escaped the notice of Hector, shepherd of the host” (Il. 22.277). Hector’s death can be seen as responding to that of Patroclus, and the combination of resonances from these two episodes links the deaths of these two heroes to the actions of Apollo and Athena in the chariot race. The visual complexity of these events dramatically increases due to their spatial context. Whereas the relevant objects in the battles were returned or removed by divine antagonists while their owners were running or fighting on foot, now equivalent objects are being transported to characters who are riding full-speed in chariots. If the earlier divine tricks were already impressive, the Homeric narrator appears to be demonstrating mastery here. Moreover, Athena’s retribution against Eumelus, ἵππουσιν δὲ οἱ ἡξε θεᾶς ζυγὸν... “and the Goddess smashed the yoke of his horses” (Il. 23.392), himself now scapegoat for Apollo’s misbehavior, furthers the cycle of substitutive violence in the Iliad while recalling the language of her favorable intervention on behalf of Diomedes during his aristeia, ἵππουσιν δὲ θεᾶς ζυγοῦ ἤψισε φόνησέν τε “the goddess laid hold of the yoke of his horses and spoke” (Il. 5.799). Within a single episode in the chariot race we find a nexus of references to the deaths of Hector and Patroclus and to

272 Also noticed by Willcock 1976, 254, Lohmann 1992, 299 n.10, Richardson 1993 ad Il. 22.276–7, and Dunkle 1997, 230. Perhaps significant here is the language of Athena “noticing” Apollo, (οὐδ’ ἄρ’ Ἀθηναίην ἐλεφθάμενος λάθ’ Ἀπόλλων, Il. 23.388) while remaining unnoticed by Hector in Il. 22.277. The use of the verbal root lath- here is itself reminiscent of Nestor’s advice to Antilochus regarding his perception of the sign, σῆμα δὲ τοῖς ἵρεσι μᾶλ’ ἄριστα, σοῦ δὲ σε λήσει (Il. 23.326).
the *aristeia* of Diomedes, the race itself standing as a concentrated example of the pattern of substitutive violence which runs through the plot of the *Iliad* and beyond.\textsuperscript{273} If Troy represents the “turning post” of the race of *nostos*, then the divine violence near the actual turn of the chariot race is a metaphor for the violence on the Trojan plain.

This potentially reflects a reality outside of the poems, in the actual chariot races that could have been found at major archaic festivals, such as the shadowy Panionia and the much-discussed Panathenaea.\textsuperscript{274} The actual turning point of the chariot race was famously violent and dangerous.\textsuperscript{275} It is tempting to speculate, moreover, that the cognitive metaphor of the race as a structuring device was conditioned by the cultural reality of epic performance at festivals.\textsuperscript{276} The poets would have used this

\textsuperscript{273} Another famous locus of Athena’s intervention was in the *nostoi*, where she variously helped Odysseus return home while conspiring with Poseidon to shipwreck Oelian Ajax (*Od*. 4.499–511, *Od*. 5.108–9). The striking similarities between the finishing-order of the chariot race and the order of the returns of the Achaean heroes narrated by Nestor in *Odyssey* 3 allow us to see Athena’s intervention in the chariot race as proleptically referring to her actions during the *nostoi*. For more on this see below.

\textsuperscript{274} On the question of the events at the earliest Greater Panathenaea of 566/5 BCE, and the *dromos* inscription (DAA 326), see Neils 2007.

\textsuperscript{275} Crowther 2004, 229–40.

\textsuperscript{276} For an evolutionary model of the Homeric poems that undergo a gradual process of Panhellenization through sequential performance at the Panathenaic festival, see Nagy 2002, 2008/9, 2009/10. For an impressive theory on the Panonia’s involvement in the formation of the Homeric poems, see Frame 2009, 515–647, accepted by Nagy 2015, 62–3, elaborated in Nagy 2009/10, 9–29. Frame’s theory argues that the twelve poets from each city of the Ionian dodecapolis performed the Homeric poems in four-book sequences. After the poems stopped being performed at the festival (putatively ~680 BCE as a response to the attacks of Gyges and the Lydians), they moved to Chios. Their descendants, known as the Homeridae, then came to Attica. This involves an acknowledged retrojection of Homeric performance at the Panathenaea onto the Panonia, which is not implausible. Given how little of archaic epic poetry actually survives, especially from the 8th–7th centuries BCE, how can we predict what would have been performed at the Panonia? If we are comfortable speculating about the performance history of the Panonia, and deem the number twelve important, what of the twelve labors of Heracles? We know that one poem recorded under Creophylus of Samos and his *epigoni* included the *Sack of Troy*, involving Heracles, and it seems plausible that the twelve labors (if this is an old number) of Heracles would be in play as well as potential material for performance at the Panonia.
mental construct precisely because of the presence of athletic racing at the festivals at which the poets themselves would compete.

There is further imagined violence at the turn of the chariot race. In the second “duel” of the race, between Menelaus and Antilochus, the language of battle reappears:

\[
\text{In accelerating in order to take the lead, Antilochus either ignores or pretends not to hear Menelaus.}^{277}
\]

Moreover, in serving as a spatial representation of the distance that Antilochus’ horses charge forward during the turn, the radius of a youth’s discus-swing during an attempted throw is an appropriate representation of the circular movement of the risky turn which Antilochus may even be in the process

---

277 See Detienne, Vernant 1991, 22.
of executing. The language here is strikingly evocative of duels, especially the formulaic phrase ἐν κοινῇ πέσοιεν (Il. 23.437), which appears in descriptions of slain warriors falling in the dust (Il. 6.453, 11.425, 13.508, 13.520, 14.452, 15.423, 17.315, 17.428). As we saw above in the contest between Diomeds and Eumelus, this episode becomes an athletic sublimation of the martial conflict of the Iliad through the use of war’s language. These references to martial and divine violence as occurring around the “turning post,” combined with the relationship between the finishing-order and the order of nostoi, appear to indicate that the Homeric tradition is self-aware of the mnemonic techniques of the “turning points” outlined in chapter 3, and presents these structuring and emergent metaphors as narrative events during the chariot race and foot race in the funeral games.

What is remarkable about the events of both the chariot race and the footrace is that if we view the turning post as a metaphor for Troy, the actions of the gods during the races correspond temporally to their actions during the narratives of the Iliad and Odyssey. Diomeds and Eumelus are involved in the retributive cycle of divine violence of Athena and Apollo as they approach the turning post, and Oilean Ajax and Odysseus are hurt and helped, respectively, by Athena only near the finish of the footrace. Similarly, Apollo and Athena are involved in the deaths of Patroclus and Hector near the walls of Troy, during the narrative of the Iliad, while Athena only kills Oilean Ajax and aids Odysseus after the sack of Troy, during the narrative of the Odyssey. The first leg of the race excluding

278 There is no actual discus competition in the funeral games, replaced instead by the apparently archaizing iron-throw. The discus reappears later in the chariot race, where Menelaus is behind Antilochus by the length of a discus-throw (…ἀνὰ τὰ πρώτα καὶ ἐς δίσκουρα λέλιπτα. Il. 23.523). However, in another odd parallelism between books 2 and 23, the discus only appears elsewhere in the Iliad at Il. 2.773–5 describing the peace-time activities of the Achaean,

279 Conceptual overlap between war and sport is anthropologically widespread, although the cultural poetics of athletic competition needs to be examined within its historical time-frame. Because of the black box of Homeric historicity, I will avoid discussing the sport-war dynamic now, but it would be a fruitful topic for the 6th-5th centuries BCE.
the turn, or that which happened before the Achaeans reached Troy, also found in the *Cypria*, is essentially undescribed. We may ask, in light of this narrative metaphor, what it means that no one can see the second half of the turn, even Idomeneus, who has the best view (*Il. 23.450–72*). This section of the “Epic Cycle,” on the other half of the turning post of Troy, would refer narratively to the events after those narrated in the *Iliad*, namely the events found in the *Aethiopis, Little Iliad*, and *Iliou Persis*, and indeed, the Homeric poems give us no clear sight of them. What this potentially indicates, however, is that the *Iliad* sees itself as existing within the same spatial and temporal continuity as the events outside of it. However, its self-definition as the first half of a turn in a race is a competitive gesture. The turn is dangerous, and can only be executed with speed and incredible skill. This is where winners are made. That the Homeric poems perhaps use this athletic metaphor to conceptualize themselves could be an indication of their performative history, taking place in close-proximity to actual chariot races at competitive festivals throughout Greece in the archaic period.
Chapter 5: Homeric Templates of Οἰνομαντεία and the Enigma of Allegory

If metaphor is fundamentally a cognitive process that manifests in language, then the presence of metaphor in poetry should be as old as the human mind’s use of metaphor. The relationship between metaphor, metonymy, conceptual integration theory, and allegory is controversial, but I am most convinced by treatments that examine allegory not in terms of “extended metaphor,” but the hermeneutic application of metaphor.280 Those who are reluctant to proceed without a detailed theoretical examination of allegory and allegoresis are encouraged to skip to this chapter’s appendix, but for now, I will comment briefly on the modern English use of “allegory.” In the medieval period, “allegory” that is, Gk. ἀλληγορία “other-speak” (received into Latin as allegoria), becomes so infused with Christian morality that it can be difficult to separate allegory in the post-Classical period from a symbolic form of religious exegesis.281 Allegorical interpretation in antiquity, as a defense of Homer against charges of impiety towards the Greek gods, is already found in Heraclitus’ Homeric Problems,282 roughly dated to 100 CE. This work clearly engages with contemporary and earlier Stoic traditions of allegorical interpretation, although the exact nature of this engagement is controversial.283

280 The 2011 issue of Metaphor & Symbol (26:2) focuses on “cognitive allegory” and situates this recent theoretical trend within the tradition of “allegorical” literary criticism found in de Man 1979. It must be said that the arbitrariness of the sign as a rule rather than a tendency has met an insurmountable challenge in the empirical evidence for the “bouba/kiki” effect, on which see D’Onofrio 2014. For a particularly creative post-structuralist reading of “allegorical desire,” see Fineman 1980.

281 See Naddaf 2009 for a recent history of allegory in philosophy. Copeland, Struck (eds.) 2010 is a recent volume devoted to the allegory from archaic Greek poetry to contemporary modern dance. Ramelli 2007 is a compendious translation of Classical allegorical sources (including Philo of Byblos and the Tables of Cebes). On the biblical allegory of Philo of Alexandria, see Ramelli 2008 and Nieto Hernández 2017. On Byzantine allegoresis of Homer in the writings of Johannes Diaconus Galenus, and his relationship to other Byzantine critics of ancient epic, of whom Michael Psellus is possibly the most famous allegorizing member, see Roilos 2014.

282 On the position of Heraclitus the Allegorist in the tradition of allegory, see Konstan 2005, xi–xxx. The definition of allegory (xvi–xviii) based on a conceptual metonymy is on the right track, but I think conceptual metaphor covers a wider range of allegorical interpretations while still allowing for metonymy to play a role.

283 On the Stoics and allegory (or allegories), see Long 1992; Boys-Stones 2003; Struck 2004, 111–51; and Ramelli 2004; 2014.
From a lexical perspective, the terms used to express “allegory” during this period were ἀλληγορία and associated verbal derivatives. This use of Gk. ἀλληγορία as indicating a form of metaphorical (or “symbolic”) interpretation, is in semasiological terms, a later development from the earlier “allegorical” use of Gk. ὑπόνοια as found in the works of Plato and Xenophon, as well as of Herodotus. Roughly contemporaneous are the uses of Gk. σύμβολον, which means something like “hidden meaning” in Demosthenes’ Against Antisthenes 83, denotes divine signs (in the form of omens) in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon (140–5), and Pindar’s Olympian 12.7–12, and flourishes in the allegorical Stoic traditions. In the oldest traditions, and continuing down into Heraclitus the Allegorist, the Greek words that mean something close to “allegory” are verbal and nominal formations from αἴνος, or αἴνιγμα, such as αἴνιγματώδης in the Derveni texts. In an account of this critical vocabulary, Andrew Ford (2002) cites Theognis’ (681) use of ἡνίχω to venture that this is the

284 For a treatment of allegory in Plutarch, his reaction to Plato, and his relationship to Epicureanism and Stoicism, see Heath 2013, 114–27. On Neoplatonic allegories of Homer, see Lamberton 1992; on Proclus the Successor’s (5th century CE) allegoresis in defense of Homer, see Lamberton 2012.


286 On the use of ὑπόνοια in Herodotus, see Sammons 2012.

287 On the symbols of these two passages see Struck 2004, 91–4. On enigmatic language and oracles in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon, see Ferrari 1997, 24–38, 40–43; Nagy 2013 465–83. On the relationship between the omens/metaphors Agamemnon’s parodos and the omen of Iliad book 2, see Heath 1999; although, I disagree with his analysis of the Iliadic snake and sparrows, “In the Iliad, the death of the birds stands separately from the human action (402).” For an insightful analysis of the relationship between speech and the differentiation (or lack thereof) of humans and animals in the Oresteia, see Heath 2005, 215–58.

288 On the early history of this word and its relationship to αἴνιγμα, see Struck 2004, 77–110.

289 On early allegorists and symbolic interpretation in antiquity, see Struck 2004, esp. 1–53; and Obbink 2010. On ancient critical traditions of allegory, see Porter 1992. See also Buffière 1956.
critical vocabulary contemporary to the 6th century allegorist Theagenes of Rhegium. Gregory Nagy has demonstrated that epic deploys αἶνος as a cryptic expression of meaning within speeches, marked for specific social groups. Examples of early reports of allegorical hermeneusis would be Theagenes’ interpretation (per Porphyry, 8.2A DK) of the fighting of the gods in book 20 of the Iliad as representing the warring elements, or Pherecydes of Syros (per Origen, Against Celsus 6.42 = B5 DK) interpreting the discussion between Zeus and Hera in book 1 of the Iliad as reflecting the relationship between God and matter. The use of the word “allegory” by necessity imports particular strands of post-Aristotelean thought, so I will use the phrase “enigmatic interpretation” (< Gk. αἴνιγμα “riddle”) both to avoid some of the intellectual-historical connotations of “allegory,” and to emphasize the likelihood that allegorical interpretation would have been conceptualized and expressed by speakers of ancient Greek (through the sixth century BCE) in terms of αἶνος or αἴνιγμα. Moreover, the use of “enigmatic” in English provides an accurate sense of the uncanny and potentially polyvalent meaning that might arise from this method of interpretation.

The most commonly acknowledged instances of allegorical narrative in the Homeric poems are the speeches of Phoenix (Il. 9.502–12) involving personified Prayers (Ἄταξί) and Ruin (Ἄτη), and the

---

290 Ford 2002, 67–89.


292 See also Cassio’s (2002, 118–19) learned discussion of Theagenes. I would perhaps be more cautious about Porphyry’s testimony as evidence for Theagenes’ literacy. Cassio concludes that because Porphyry says that Theagenes wrote, Theagenes was a “writer” responding to fixed versions of the Homeric text. Surely possible, perhaps even probable. But, is Porphyry known to represent faithfully the process of composition, performance, and transmission of ancient texts? That is, would Porphyry have ever said, even if it had been the case, that Theagenes delivered public lectures that were transcribed and circulated? One might also be skeptical of the retrojection of defenses of Homer against impiety to the sixth century.
apology of Agamemnon that tells of personified Ruin and its role in misguided decisions (II. 19.86–138). A more complex case is Patroclus’ personal and genealogical critique of Achilles in book 16:

νηλεές, οὐκ ἄρα σοί γε πατήρ ἢν ἵπποτα Πηλεύς, οὐδὲ Θέτις μήτηρ γλαυκὴ δὲ σε τίκτε θάλασσα πέτραι τ’ ἡλίβατοι, ὅτι τοι νόος ἐστὶν ἀπηνής.

Il. 16.33–35

“Pitiless, your father was not Peleus the horseman, nor was Thetis your mother, but the shining sea bore you, and the steep rocks, because your intent is harsh.”

Here Achilles’ parents are objectified using paretymological and biographical details: Achilles is the son of rocks, and not of Peleus, with a likely implication of Mt. Pelion, the biographical home of his father; his mother is the sea, and not the sea-goddess Thetis. Paradoxically, the physical traits of his inanimate “parents” are then passed genetically to Achilles, who manifests them in psychological terms. This notion was argued forcefully by Glenn Most (1993), who concluded that Patroclus was


294 Wider arguments for “etymological” allegory in the Homeric poems often proceed from the scholar’s initial observation of the juxtaposition of similar phonemic elements in the Homeric poems, and then imputing a motive to the creator(s) of the passage in question (see recently Tsitsibakou-Vasalos 2000, with extensive bibliography). This motive, or whether the repetition is intentional or unintentional in a given context, will I think always remain mysterious. The necessary claim, that regular juxtaposition “suggests not a mere pursuit of assonance” (Tsitsibakou-Vasalos 2000, 3) is to my mind impossible to demonstrate with probability on an individual basis. This is basically an argument regarding the intention of the poet(s). Moreover, to prove a division (or lack thereof) between assonance and etymology in Homeric poetry would require some external evidence for archaic Greek views about phonemic juxtaposition and the principle of sound–iconicity, or the nomen est omen principle.


296 In cognitive terms, this passage is an extremely complex metaphorical blend involving the inputs of Achilles’ parents: Peleus and Thetis, and their geographical and paretymological counterparts (the rocks, via Mt. Pelion, and the sea, via Thetis’ status as sea-goddess), and a partial personification of the latter (they “give birth” to Achilles), with a “depersonification” of the former (they are no longer a man and a goddess). Inside the blend, the physical attributes of these partial personified geographical objects (roughness, harshness) metaphorically blend to produce the emergent notion of Achilles’ harsh psychological profile.
in effect, the first allegorizer of Homeric poetry. I will argue below that the role of allegorical interpretation runs much more deeply through Homeric poetry than even these accounts acknowledge.

Specifically, I have seen no argument distinguishing an allegorical, or “enigmatic” method of textual interpretation from divinatory interpretation as found in the Homeric poems in response to bird omens. The following will argue that Homeric poetry not only presupposes an application of enigmatic interpretation to epic poetry, but encourages it; this proceeds from an observation, namely that complex bird omens (those consisting of multiple actors) in the Iliad correspond in their structure to the form of ensuing battle narratives. The equation between enigmatic language and divination is already present in the Derveni papyrus:

Col. 7


10 ὡς]ν καὶ [τοὺς ο]χι το νομοι[θετείσ]μ[ὴν το]ὶς πολλοῖς,
11 ἀλλά διδάσκειν τοὺς τῇ]ν ἀκοήν [καθαρεῦ]ντας, κατ[ά]
“<I shall also prove that Orpheus composed a> hymn that tells of wholesome and permissible things. For he was speaking sacredly with his poetic composition, and it was impossible to state the application of his words and what was meant. His composition is prophetic and riddling for people. But Orpheus himself did not wish to utter contestable riddles, but great things in riddles. In fact he is speaking sacredly from the first word to the last, as he reveals even in his easily-explained verse: for the one who bids them ‘shut the doors’ on their ears is saying that he is certainly not making laws for the many, but instructing those who are pure in hearing . . .”

Although the reading will necessarily be conjectural given the state of the 4th-century papyrus, the evidence here potentially suggests a 5th century equation between poetry that is mantic (μαντικὴ ἡ πόησις, 4) and riddling (αἰνιγματώδης, 5). The ancient acknowledgement of the similarity between divination and textual interpretation is traditional, and I argue below that it exists already in the Homeric poems.

In book 2 of the Iliad, Odysseus reminds the Greeks of an omen at Aulis to prevent them from fleeing across the ocean. In the reported bird omen, Odysseus recounts that during a sacrifice to the Olympians, a snake slithered from beneath the altar and up a plane-tree, consuming eight young sparrows while their mother flapped helplessly above them. Only after consuming the eight nestlings did the snake finally eat the ninth and larger bird. Zeus then turns the snake to stone. Odysseus reports that the famous seer Calchas interpreted this omen to indicate that nine years had been used up in the Trojan war, and that in the tenth Troy would fall:

ώς οὖν δεινά πέλωρα θεῶν εἰσήλθ’ ἐκατόμβας,
Κάλχας δ’ αὐτίκ’ ἐπείτα θεοπροπέων ἁγόρευε.

300 On the uncertainties surrounding the forms of ἱερολογεῖται in lines 2 and 7, see Henrichs 2003, 233 with n.86.

301 So I attempt to argue for Konstan’s (2005, xiv) suggestion: “Indeed, I would venture, very tentatively, the possibility that criticism such as Xenophanes’, and responses to it like that of Theagenes (if indeed this was his purpose), may have arisen still earlier, and in tandem with Homeric epic.” On messenger scenes as allegorical, or perhaps better, “metapoetic” in epic, see Laird 2003. On the relationship between allegorical interpretation in omens and post-Homeric literary criticism, see Ford 2002, 80–85; and Struck 2004, 29–32, 90–96, 163–79. As Struck says (2004, 179), “[S]ymbolic/enigmatic discourse is born from the power of the secret.” For more on divination and its relationship to intuition, see Struck 2016.
“So as the terrible portents approached the sacrifices of the gods, Calchas then immediately addressed us while prophesying: ‘Why are you silent, Achaeans with flowing locks? Zeus the councilor showed this great omen to us late and late-fulfilled, whose fame will not ever pass away. As this snake has eaten the children of the sparrow and her, eight, but the mother was the ninth, who bore the children, so we for so many years will fight there, and on the tenth year we will take the city of the wide-ways.’ That man spoke thusly: and indeed all these things come to pass. But come on and remain here, all you well-greaved Achaeans, until we take the great city of Priam.’

Calchas’ interpretation works, and is actually quite abstract, insofar as the metaphor, if it features a consistent mapping between domains, would entail that the birds represent the years, and the snake represents some notion of agentive time consuming them. It also uses inclusive counting, so nine birds “equal” ten years. In this case, two plus two would equal five. The scholia, incidentally, seem confused about this and suggest that we add the snake to arrive at the number ten.

---

302 My thanks to Gregory Nagy for help on this point.

303 ἢ ὅτι τῶν εἴναὶ πληρωθέντων ἀνάγκη νοεῖ τῶν ἐπίκεισθα δέκατον· ἢ καὶ τὸν δράκοντα αὐτὸν δεί συναρίθμησιν, ὡς ἔστι δέκατος, ὡς δὲ τοῦ ἀγώνος ἐν τούτῳ μέλλοντος παύσεσθαι. Α b(BCE3E4) T.
The structure of a list of victims plus a notable last victim is a basic template of *aristeiai* in the *Iliad*. A certain hero kills X number of opponents, only to meet with and often conquer one additional and more formidable foe. In a lengthy article from 1991, Henk Singor outlined how nearly every list of heroes in the *Iliad* is in multiples of three, and a disproportionate amount of these consists of nine heroes. Some of the numbers are somewhat suspect, but the general observations that nine is a popular number in Homeric lists, and that multiples of three are a mnemonic technique, are clearly correct.\(^4\)

The following are a few examples from the middle books: nine heroes resist the Trojan onslaught (*Il. 13.690–700*). The Trojans march towards the ships under eight leaders, with Hector as the ninth and supreme commander (*Il. 13.790–802*). Nine Greeks are primarily responsible for the defense of the ships (*Il. 14.442–522*). Nine Greek heroes lead the counter-attack (*Il. 16.284–350*).\(^5\) In the thick of the battle, Hector kills nine heroes after the narrator asks for the names of his victims:

```
Ἔνθα τίνα πρῶτον, τίνα δ’ ὅστατον ἐξενάριξεν
"Εκτῷ Πριαμίδης, ὅτε οἱ Ζεὺς κῦδος ἔδωκεν;
Ἄσαῖον μὲν πρῶτα καὶ Αὐτόνοον καὶ Ὀπίτην
καὶ Δόλοπα Κλυτίδην καὶ Ὀφέλτιον ἢδ’ Ἀγέλαον
Αἰσυμνόν τ’ Ὡρόν τε καὶ Τιπόνοον μενεχάρμην.
```

*Il. 11.299–303*

Then whom first, whom last did he slay,
Hector son of Priam, when Zeus gave him glory?
Asaeus first, and Autonous and Opites,
and Dolops son of Klytus, and Opheltius and Agelaus
and Aesumnus and Orus and Hipponous whose joy in battle is steadfast.

\(^4\) Singor (1991, 43) claims that Sarpedon’s death fits into a 9+1 scheme, but this does not take into account that Patroclus targets and kills Thrasymelus as well (*16.462–65*), so Sarpedon is in fact the eleventh to die.

\(^5\) Jonathan Fenno, in a series of CAMWS papers (e.g. 2007, 2015), has outlined how the multiples of three extend to the numbers of dead heroes killed over time by protagonists in their *aristeiai*. By the end of the day leading up to the duel between Ajax and Hector in book 7, both Hector and Odysseus have killed nine men.

\(^6\) For a list of lists of dead heroes, see Hainsworth 1993 *ad loc.*
Only the ninth foe, Hipponous, receives an epithet. The tenth foe, Diomedes, knocks Hector’s helmet off with his spear (Il. 11.349–56) and causes him to retreat. Before Odysseus is wounded and withdraws (Il. 11.487–8), he kills three Trojans (Il. 11.321–2, 335) then five more (Il. 11.420–7), only killing the ninth, and most prominent, Socus, after being wounded by him.

Therefore, the number of sparrows, 8+1, fits into the general typology of lists in the Iliad, and specifically within the typological structure of the aristeia, in which a hero kills a certain number of semi-anonymous heroes followed by a more important final one. This number is frequently nine, and sometimes ten, but only ten victims when the tenth is the charioteer of the major hero who is being targeted.307

In conclusion, the omen that Odysseus describes in his reporting of Calchas’ interpretation precisely matches the events leading to Odysseus’ retreat in book 11. Odysseus kills eight Trojans without event, then confronts and defeats a formidable ninth opponent before retreating. Likewise, the snake kills eight nestlings and then the mother, before being turned to stone by Zeus. Calchas’ interpretation of the omen in book 2 features a more complex metaphor than that of imagining the omen as a reflection of a hero’s killing eight opponents plus a ninth. This metaphorical mapping would just entail the claim that a snake killing birds represents an Achaeans killing Trojans or a Trojan

307 Ενθα τίνα πρῶτον τίνα δ’ ἄστατον ἑξανάρξας / Πατρόκλεις, δὲ δὴ σε θεία δάνατον δὲ κάλεσαν; / Ἀδρηστον μὲν πρῶτα καὶ Αὐτόνοον καὶ Ἐχεκλον / καὶ Πέριμον Μεγάθνην καὶ Ἐπίστορα καὶ Μελάνιππον, / αὐτάρ ἵππευ Ελασσόν καὶ Μούλιον ἰδὲ / Πυλάρτην· / τοὺς ἑλέν· οἱ δ’ ἀλλοι φύγαδε μνώοντο ἑκαστοί (Il. 16.692–8). Patroclus kills 9 victims, followed by his final kill, Hector’s charioteer Cebriones (16.743). This model of a successful 9 or a failed 9+1 is particularly interesting in terms of Teucer’s 8 kills in quick succession in book 8.273–77, after which he aims for Hector as his ninth, but kills Gorgythion instead, Priam’s illegitimate son (8.303); Teucer then aims for Hector again, and kills Archeptolemus (8.312), Hector’s charioteer. Hector then hits Teucer with a stone, paralyzing his arm (8.327–8). Teucer was aiming at Hector as the ninth superior foe, and actually does kill a superior foe in Gorgythion, but when he pushes his luck, he kills an inferior 10th foe and is met with a crushing defeat at the hands of his intended target, Hector.
killing Achaeans. Moreover, the snake eating the birds and their mother corresponds to the two snakes eating Laocoon and his two sons in *Aeneid* 2. Virgil’s version is within doubly reported speech: it is Aeneas’ representation of Sinon’s speech (with its own inset story of Ulysses and Calchas, potentially referring to *Iliad* 2, where Odysseus reports the omen of Calchas).\(^{308}\)

The interpretative tension between these two types of enigmatic construal, birds representing human beings and/or representing abstract units of time, recurs in perhaps the most famous case of sign interpretation in the *Odyssey*, Penelope’s reported dream of the eagle and geese:

> “ἆλλ᾽ ἄγε μοι τὸν ἄνειρον ὑπόκριναι καὶ ἅχουσον.  
> χήνες μοι κατὰ αἰκον ἔεικοσι πυρὸν ἔδουσιν  
> ἐξ ὕδατος, καὶ τὴ σφυ λαῖνομαι ἐλαφρῶσα.  
> ἔλθον δ’ ἐξ ὅρος μέγας αἰετὸς ἄγκυλοχήλης  
> πᾶσι κατ’ αὐχένας ἤξε καὶ ἔκτανεν: οἱ δ’ ἐκέχυντο  
> ἄβροι ἐν μεγάροις, δ’ ἐς αἰθέρα διαν ἄερθη,  
> αὐτάρ ἐγὼ κλαῖον καὶ ἐκώκυον ἐν περ ὅνειρῳ,  
> ἀμφυ δέ μ’ ἄγερθοντο ἐὐπλοκαμίδες Ἀχαιαι,  
> ὅτε κτρ’ ἐλοφυρομένην, δ’ ἐμοὶ αἰετὸς ἔκτανε χήνας.  
> ἅψ δ’ ἐλθὼν κατ’ ἀρ’ ἐξετ’ ἐπὶ προθύντες μελάθρῳ,  
> φωνῇ δ’ ἠτατείεσσα κατερήτυε φώνῃσέν τε:  
> ἵσαρσει, Ἰκαρίου κούρη τήλεκλειτοίσιν.  
> σὺν δναρ, ἀλλ’ ὑπαρ ἐσθλῖν, δ’ τοι τετελεσμένον ἔσται.  
> χήνες μὲν μνηστήρες, ἐγὼ δέ τοι αἰετὸς ὅρως  
> ἑα πάρος, νῦν αὐτὲ τοῖς πόσις εἰλήλουσα,  
> ἐς πάσι μνηστήριον ἁείκεα πότμον ἔφησον.  
> ἄς ἡφατ’, αὐτάρ ἐμε μελανηθῇς ὑπνος ἀνήκε  
> παπτήνασα δ’ ἐνὶ μεγάροις ἔνοθα πυρὸν ἔρεπτομένους παρὰ πύελον, ἤχι πάρος περ.”
> *Od*. 19.535—53

> “But come on and interpret and listen to my dream.  
> My twenty geese are eating wheat throughout the house,  
> out of the water, and I rejoice in looking at them.  
> But a great eagle with a curved beak, having come from the mountain,

\(^{308}\) See Knox 1950.
broke all of their necks and killed them, and they were strewn in heaps in the hall, and he has risen into the shining mist.
But I was crying and wailing, in my dream, though, and the Achaean women with beautiful hair gathered around me, lamenting pitiably that an eagle had killed my geese.
Having returned, the eagle sat on an extending roof-beam, and in a mortal voice checked and addressed me, ‘Take heart, daughter of far-famed Icarius; it is not a dream, but a good waking vision that will be accomplished for you. The geese are the suitors, and I your eagle who was earlier a bird, have returned.
Now as your husband, who will release an unseemly fate upon all of the suitors.’
So he spoke, and honey-sweet sleep released me.
Having looked around, I noticed my geese in the palace, feeding on wheat by the trough, just as before.”

The disguised Odysseus-as-beggar then agrees with the reported interpretation of the disguised Odysseus-as-eagle: clearly the geese represent the doomed suitors. However, there are problems with this interpretation which allow an alternative (or perhaps better, an “additional”) interpretation; first, there are many more than twenty suitors, as is apparent from Telemachus’ miniature catalogue of 108 men;\(^3\) second, the number twenty has appeared dramatically in the previous scene in book 19, wherein Odysseus confirms his identity to Eurycleia, saying that he has returned home in the twentieth year since his departure from Ithaca.\(^4\) Given this textual evidence, Louise Pratt’s suggestion of the interpretation of the twenty geese, as representing the years that Penelope has lost while tending to the house of Odysseus in his absence, is clearly viable.\(^5\) The best recent treatment of Penelope’s avian

---

\(^3\) See *Od.* 16.2.41–57.

\(^4\) νῦν δ’ ἥλιος πολλὰ μαχίμασκα / ἡλικὸν εἰκοστῷ ἐτῶν ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν. (*Od.* 18.483–4). Indeed the mention of twenty years in connection with Odysseus’ absence is a leitmotif, especially through the last third of the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 2.175, 16.206, 17.327, 19.222, 19.484, 21.208, 23.102, 23.170, 24.322).

\(^5\) Pratt 1994, advancing with significant clarity Finley 1978, 247. This is against Freudian interpretations (e.g. Austin 1975 229–31), which see in Penelope’s dreamt tears a subconscious fondness for the suitors. See Levanjouk 2011, 229–32 with notes for a summary of previous scholarship. Rozokoki’s (2001, 2) claim that ‘twenty’ in the *Odyssey* represents a generically large number is not really supported by the textual evidence: ἔξωείκοσι (*Od.* 14.98) and ἐκαστάβςιον (*Od.* 22.37) are non-
symbolism is that of Olga Levaniouk (2011), in which she argues that Penelope already suspects the identity of the disguised Odysseus and is offering this (potentially fabricated) dream to him as a test of whether he will reassure her; she is myth-making, and supplies her disguised husband with his own oracular response in the form of the avian Odysseus’ dream-internal interpretation.\textsuperscript{312} Moreover, if we keep in mind the concept of inclusive counting, Penelope’s fearful vision will turn out to be untrue; twenty dead geese would represent twenty one years of absence, but Odysseus has returned in the twentieth year.\textsuperscript{313}

As Odysseus recalls and reports Calchas’ interpretation of the snake and sparrows in book 2 of the \textit{Iliad}, so he confirms his avian stand-in’s interpretation of Penelope’s vision. In both cases, the potential for multiple interpretations does not eliminate one in favor of another, but rather allows for the portents to have multiple oracular outcomes. So in the \textit{Odyssey} we might interpret the geese as representing both the years that Penelope almost lost and the suitors that Odysseus will kill, in the \textit{Iliad} we might interpret the sparrows eaten by the snake as representing the years lost at Troy, as well as the heroes killed in combat, potentially presaging Odysseus’ exploits in book 11 of the \textit{Iliad}.


\textsuperscript{313} One might wonder at this one remaining “goose”/“year” and the presence of the omen involving an eagle carrying a goose in \textit{Od.} 15.160–78, which Helen interprets as Odysseus’ taking revenge on the suitors. One might want to interpret the goose there as representing the temporal anxiety of Odysseus’ potential return, i.e. will he return before the year is up? Helen’s mention of her twenty-year absence from Greece (\textit{Il.} 24.765) makes her alienation similar not only to Odysseus’, but to Penelope’s. Of course, there was no lack of ancient debate as to whether Helen left willingly, and so the parallel of “twenty years” is fascinatingly complex. Of further relevance might be that \textit{Il.} 24.765–6 \textit{~ Od.} 19.222–3.
The Iliadic correspondence between birds and heroic opponents would be an interesting observation in isolation, but as it turns out, complex bird omens in the *Iliad* elsewhere correspond to the structure of battle. Moreover, the birds (eagles, geese, and doves) that appear in omens elsewhere in the *Odyssey* are in fact always interpreted by characters within the narrative as representing conflict between Odysseus and/or Telemachus and the suitors. The interpretation of omens in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in this instance is inverted. As outlined in detail below, oracular interpreters in the *Iliad* suppose complex bird omens to symbolize abstract concepts or situational success rather than conceptually mapping the separate animals onto separate people; however, the *Odyssey*’s interpreters always see the birds as representing specific people, with birds of prey representing Odysseus and Telemachus, and domesticated birds representing the suitors. The interpretative method of the *Iliad*’s augurs is somewhat strange given that the *Iliad*’s narrative regularly juxtaposes heroes with animals, including birds, in similes.

The omen of book 12 of the *Iliad*, when the fighting is at its most dramatic, also involves a snake and a bird, this time an eagle, which carries a snake in its talons:

\[
\text{ὄρνις γάρ σφιν ἐπήλθε περησέμεναι μμακώσιν}
\]
\[
\text{αιετός υψητής ἐπ’ ἀριστερὰ λαὸν ἔεργον}
\]
\[
\text{φοιηνεντα δράκωντα φέρων ὀνύχεσι πέλωρον}
\]

---

314 See *Od*. 2.145–76 (Halisthernes’ interpretation of two eagles who fly into the assembly), 15.160–78 (Helen’s interpretation of an eagle carrying a goose), 15.525–34 (Theoclymenus’ interpretation of a falcon plucking out a dove’s feathers), 17.355–61 (Theoclymenus’ discussion with Penelope of the preceding interpretation), 20.242–6 (Amphinomus’ interpretation of an eagle holding a dove, which is comparatively underdetermined), on which see Ready 2014, 48, engaging with de Jong 2001, 496 ad *Od*. 20.242–7. On divination in the *Odyssey*, see also Struck 2016, 251–62, which frames the interpretation of these signs as similar to modern English conceptions of “intuition.” One might add to this analysis that these signs will inevitably engage the audience’s intuition(s) as well.


316 For more on this omen, see Bushnell 1982; Collins 2002.
For then a bird(-sign) approached them eager to advance,
a high-flying eagle corralling the people on the left
and holding a red snake, a monster, in its talons,
still alive, breathing, nor did it yet forget its joy (for battle),
for it struck the eagle holding it on the chest by its neck curling backwards,
and the bird tossed the snake away to the ground distressed with pains,
and threw it down into the middle of the crowd,
and the bird itself screeching flew with the blasts of the wind.

The snake twists back and bites the eagle, which drops its resilient prey. The visual characteristics of the
omen correspond to the back and forth between the Greeks and Trojans throughout the battle books;
just when one side seems to have attained victory, or one warrior seems to have grabbed a corpse to
despoil, fortunes are reversed suddenly and violently.\(^{317}\)

What has gone unnoticed is that there are highly idiosyncratic lexical similarities between the
omen and the deaths of heroes in books 12 and 13. Therefore, just as in the case of the omen in book 2,
the omen in book 12 appears to correspond to the ensuing battle narrative in highly specific ways.

Row (1) contains the only two collocations οὐ (…) λήθετο χάρμης in Homeric poetry; row (2) the only
two collocations of δειρή and κόπτει; row (3) the last two participial usages of ἀσπαίρειν in the Iliad;
row (4) two out of three uses of the verbal form ἰδνώθη in Homeric poetry;\(^{318}\) and row (5) the only two
collecations of a participle of κλάζειν and a finite form of πέτεσθαι.

---

\(^{317}\) Sergios Paschalis points out to me (p.c.) that the “entwined” fates of heroes, such as the death of Achilles following from
the death of Hector, and the death of Hector following from the death of Patroclus, could also be indicated in this omen.

\(^{318}\) Only elsewhere referring to Thersites (I. 2.266).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Omen of Eagle and Snake</th>
<th>The Ensuing Battle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) ζωὸν ἐτε ἀσταίροντα, καὶ οὗ πω λήθετο χάρμης. I. 12.203</td>
<td>Σαρπήδοντι δ’ ἤχος γένετο Γλαύκου ἀπόντος αὐτός’ ἐπεὶ τ’ ἐνόησεν· ἄμως δ’ ὁ Λήθητο χάρμης... I. 12.392–3 (Sarpedon does not lose courage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) κόψε γὰρ αὐτόν ἔχοντα κατὰ στήβος παρὰ δειρῆν I. 12.204</td>
<td>...κεφαλὴν δ’ ἀπαλῆς ἀπὸ δειρῆς κόψεν Οὐλιάδης κεχωλωμένος Λυμφάχοιο, ἤκε δὲ μν σφαρηθέν ἐλεξάμενος δι’ ὅμιλον· Ἑκτὸρ δὲ προπάροιθε ποδὸν πέσεν ἐν κονίησι. I. 13.202–5 (Oelian Ajax decapitates Imbrius)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) ζωὸν ἐτε ἀσταίροντα, καὶ οὗ πω λήθετο χάρμης, I. 12.203</td>
<td>δούπησεν δὲ πεσών, δόρυ δ’ ἐν κραδίῃ ἐπεπήγει, ἢ βα οὐσαροποιοι καὶ σφαῖραν πελέμιζεν ἐγχεος. II. 13.442–4 (Death of Alkathous)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) ἱδνωθεὶς ὀψίσω· δ’ ἀπὸ ἰθεν ἤκε ἱμαῖς I. 12.205</td>
<td>...λάκε δ’ ὀστέα, τῷ δὲ οὐσε πάρ ποσίν αματάοντα καὶ χαμαι πέπον ἐνκονίησιν, ἱδνωθή δὲ πεσών. I. 13.616–18 (Death of Peisandrus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) αὐτὸς δὲ κλαγῆς πέτετο πνοῆς ἀνέμιοιο. I. 12.207</td>
<td>Ἡ Ῥα, καὶ ὄρμῳ δρεῖ νισθέντι βοικῶς κεκλήγων, δία δὲ Τρώων πέτετ’ ἢς ἐπικούρων. I. 13.754–5 (Hector compared to a mountain)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Trojan seer Polydamas’ interpretation of this omen has attracted much attention, insofar as he adds details not present in the narrator’s account of the omen. He claims the bird is taking the snake back to its children in the nest (οὐδ’ ἐτέλεσε φέρων ἄμων τεκέσσιν ἐςιν, I. 12.222). Moreover, Polydamas claims that the dropped snake represents the Trojans that will be left behind in the Greek camp for slaughter, even if the Trojans are successful in breaking through the Achaeus wall (I. 12.223–27). Of course, this is exactly what happens. Thus to Polydamas, the path of the eagle, to the snake, and

---

319 There might also be here an implicit appeal to Hector’s need to provide for his family. This clearly does not work, since Hector angrily rejects the efficacy of interpreting bird omens, instead placing his trust in what he interprets to be the will of Zeus (I. 12.230–50). We might also wonder at the introduction of the bird’s children in light of book 2’s omen, featuring the death of the nestlings. See Heath 1999, 398 n.11 for a treatment of this passage in terms of Homeric descriptions of animals defending or losing their children.
back home, represents the path of the Trojan’s advance and retreat, and the snake, far from representing the Achaeans, represents the full host of the Trojans. He concludes by claiming that any true interpreter of (or “responder to”) omens would say the same, διδέ χ’ ὑποκρίναιτο θεοπρόπος, δς σάφα θυμῷ / εἰδὴι τεράων καὶ οἱ πεθοίατο λαοί (Ili. 12.228–9).320 The introduction of the omen, and Polydamas’ additions, as Jonathan Ready points out in a recent work, invite the external audience to participate in the decoding of the omen much as Polydamas does.321 Ready also observes that omen interpretations are never challenged in Homeric poetry: they can be denied as omens by other characters, but a competitive interpretation is never offered.322

I suggest that there is meant to be external competition in the interpretation of omens. The external audience, or at least those who pay close enough attention, are meant by the end of the Iliad to equal, or perhaps even surpass, the knowledge of the internal characters. The relationship between internal and external audience to the omen broadly corresponds to Jørgensen’s Law: the external audience knows the identities of the gods whose agency the interpreting character cannot see clearly. It is important to restate here that Homeric omens are polysemous, and it is invalid to claim that Calchas’, Penelope’s, or Polydamas’ interpretations of the omens in question are wrong, even if there seems to be evidence for alternative explanations. Omens in Homeric poetry are interpretively polysemous.

---

320 See n. 312 supra.

321 See Bushnell 1982, 11, “It may be, however, that the Iliad invites its reader (sic) to imitate Polydamas.” See also Ready 2014, 46–8 on the external reader’s role in omen interpretation. See Collins 2002, 36–9 on the relationship between Polydamas’ interpretation, Hector’s rejection of all bird omens, and Odysseus’ report of Calchas’ message in book 2 in terms of improvisational poetic performance.

322 Ready 2014, 40–1.
It seems economical, especially given the anthropological prevalence of animal fables, to theorize that the snake and the bird(s) can straightforwardly represent people, and their fighting represents war. So far, one might respond to the above events in the following way: Homeric poets had mnemonic templates for composing battle narratives, and used these same mnemonics for composing bird omens; the formal coincidence is accidental. My response would be that in the case of both of the Iliadic omens, they narratively precede the events which structurally correspond to them, making it less likely that their predictive power is due to coincidence. There have been no battles before the omen recounted in book 2.

My further hypothesis would be that the Homeric tradition is actually training its audience in enigmatic interpretation, and that the frame between seer and audience is made to be broken. In narratological terms, there should be a metalepsis, a breaking of the narrative frame.\footnote{323 Or perhaps an audience’s “Transworld” inhabitation of a possible world outside of its own, in this case, that of the Homeric narrative. On “Possible Worlds Theory” and its relevancy for metalepsis, see Bell 2016.} The audience should do its best impersonation of Calchas, Penelope, or Polydamas. I argue then, that Homeric poetry is hermeneutically protreptic. We are meant to learn and employ enigmatic interpretation, specifically as it applies to bird omens and relate these omens to the structuring principles of battle narrative. In simple terms, the birds represent people. The exception, Penelope’s “dream,” proves the rule, insofar as the narrative’s internal interpretation is that of Odysseus’ taking revenge on the suitors, but Penelope’s very request for interpretation speaks not only to the internal audience (Odysseus), but to the external audience as well. The fact that the number of the geese (20) is nowhere close to the number of suitors (108) potentially alerts an audience to the fact that Odysseus’ interpretation is not
the only possible answer. The metaphorical interpretation of birds as people also seems to be consistent with Virgil’s reception of Homer, since in both cases, he takes what were birds in the Homeric omens and turns them into people. The devoured sparrows and their mother become the devoured children of Laocoon and their father in Aeneid 2; Virgil here multiplies the snake into two.  

In book 11 of the Aeneid, the eagle-snake fight in Iliad book 12 appears in a simile comparing Tarchon’s seizure of Venulus to the Iliadic omen:

\begin{verbatim}
utque volans alte raptum cum fulva draconem
fert aquila implicitique pedes atque unguibus haesit,
saucius at serpens sinuosa volumina versat
arrectisque horret squamis et sibilat ore
arduus insurgens, illa haud minus urget obunco
luctantem rostro, simul aethera verberat alis:
haud aliter praedam Tiburtum ex agmine Tarchon
portat ovens.
\end{verbatim}

\textit{Aen.} 11.751–8

As when a high flying, tawny eagle bears a captured snake, and has clasped its feet and clings with its talons, but the wounded serpent turns its folding coils and becoming rigid with its raised scales, hisses, rising up, but that eagle nonetheless presses the struggling snake with its sharp beak while it strikes the air with its wings, not otherwise does Tarchon carry his prize from the battle line of the Tiberians, while shouting.

Here the snake is unable to strike back at eagle that has seized it from above, and so Tarchon is able to straightforwardly carry his prey out of battle. There is no reversal equivalent to the Iliadic omen. In short, Homer’s birds, and sometimes the even snakes, are found as people in Virgil’s poem.

The test-case of my theory of enigmatic interpretation, and of competition between internal and external audience, would be if the enigmatic interpretation of a strange event involving a bird, and violence, in the Iliad gains meaning from this sort of hermeneutic process. I will argue below that the
archery contest in the Iliadic funeral games constitutes this test case, and demonstrates categorically
that Homeric poetry presupposes and encourages “enigmatic” interpretation. Moreover, the reception
and transformation of this episode in the poems of Apollonius Rhodius and Virgil indicate that they
understood the episode in the same way.

In the archery contest, the dove, restrained by a rope attached to its foot, is incapable of flying
away from the mast that Achilles has set in the sand. The first contestant, Teucer, severs the rope with
an arrow shot, and the second, Meriones, prays to Apollo, and then shoots the bird in the chest, with
his arrow inexplicably returning to the archer’s foot. The events of books 2 and 23 involve the deaths of
birds atop a tree or mast and the involvement of Zeus or Apollo, respectively. They differ in crucial
respects, with the former being an explicit omen, embedded within Odysseus’ report of Calchas’
interpretation, and the latter as occurring within the narrative without anyone internal to the story
interpreting the events as an omen. Nevertheless, the events of the archery contest are explicitly
portrayed as wondrous to the internal audience, λαοὶ δ’ αὐτὰ θεοῦντο τε θαμβησάν τε (Il. 23.881).324 Very
little has been written on the archery contest, mostly because it seems somewhat strange and
miraculous:

Αὐτάρ δ’ θεοῦντι τίθει ιόεντα σίδηρον,
καὶ δ’ εὐθεία δέκα μὲν πελέκεσι, δέκα δ’ ἡμιπέλεκκα,
Ιστόν δὲ εὐθεῖεν νηὸς κυανοπρῷροιο
τηλοῦ ἐπὶ ψαμάθοις, ἐκ δὲ τρήρωνα πέλειαν
λεπτῇ μηρίνῳ δὴσεν ποδὸς, ἢς ἢρ’ ἀνώγει
tοξεύειν· δὲ μὲν κε βάλῃ τρήρωνα πέλειαν,
πάντας δειράμενος πελέκεςι οἰκόνδε φερέσθων·
ἣς δὲ κε μηρίνῳ τύχῃ ἄνθης θρήνοις ἁμαρτῶν,
 JFactoryς γὰρ ἡ κεῖνος, δ’ δ’ οἰσεται ἡμιπέλεκκα.

324 Cf. the reaction to the omen of book 2, ἢμεὶς δ’ ἤπειρος δειράμενον οἶος ἐτύχεθα (Il. 2.320) “And we standing there were
amazed at what had been done.”
But Achilles sets up the dark iron for the archers,  
And he sets down ten axes, and ten half-axes,  
And he sets the mast of a dark prowed ship  
far away in the sands, and he binds a quivering dove  
by its foot with a thin cord, and he ordered them to  
shoot at her, “Whoever strikes the quivering dove,  
taking all the axes let him carry them homeward.  
But whoever strikes the cord, having missed the bird,  
since that man is lesser, he will carry the half-axes.”

In organizing the prizes, Achilles predicts the exceptional cutting of the cord before the contest  
even begins. This has rightly puzzled commentators since antiquity, yet one might see in Achilles’  
prophetic statement a sign of “enigma” in the scene to come. The curious prediction of Achilles would  
alert attentive audience members to the potential for an interpretative parallel between this episode  
and the bird-omens earlier in Iliad’s narrative. As the omens of books 2 and 12 correspond to ensuing  
Deaths of people in the Iliad, so the dove’s death in the archery contest is also depicted with language  
elsewhere used to describe slain heroes in the Iliad:

αὐτὰρ ὃ μήρινθον βάλε πὰρ πόδα, τῇ διέδετ’ ὄρνις:  
ἀντικρύ δ’ ἀπὸ μήρινθου τὰμε πικρός δῖστός.  
ἡ μὲν ἐπείτ’ ἠξείρυσε ἐκεῖρος τόξον· ἀτάρ δὴ διόστοι έχεν πάλαι, ὡς ἴθυνεν.  
αὐτίκα δ’ ἠπείλησεν ἐκηβόλῳ Ἀπόλλων σπερχόμενος ἀρνῶν πρωτογόνων ῥέξειν κλειτὴν ἑκατόμβην.  
ὕψι δ’ ὑπὰ νεφέων εἶδε τρήρωνα πέλειαν·  
τῇ ῥ’ ὅ γε δινεύουσαν ὑπὸ πτέρυγος βάλε μέσσην, ἀντικρύ δὲ διήλθε βέλος· τὸ μὲν ἂψ ἐπὶ γαίῃ  
πρόσθεν Μηριόναο πάγη ποδός· αὐτὰρ ἢ ὄρνις ἰστὶς ἐφεξιομένη νηὸς κυανοπρόφοροι  

325 See Chantraine and Goube 1972 ad 23.857, Richardson 1993, 265–6. Aristonicus via the A scholia ad 23.857 reports that  
Aristarchus found Achilles’ prediction inappropriate.
But that man struck the cord by the foot, by which the bird was bound; the sharp arrow, cut away the cord straight-through. Then the bird darted toward the sky, and the cord fell towards the earth: then the Achaeans thundered with applause. But Meriones, in a hurry snatched up the bow from his hand, and indeed he was holding the arrow for a long time, as Teucer aimed, and immediately he promised to Apollo the far-shooter, to sacrifice a noble hecatomb of firstborn lambs. High up, below the clouds, he saw the quivering dove, there he struck the whirling middle of the dove under its wing, and the arrow passed straight on through, and it stuck back in the ground by the foot of Meriones. But the bird, sitting upon the mast of the dark-prowed ship, drooped its neck, and at once parted its thick wings. And swiftly its quick spirit fluttered away from its limbs, and far from its spirit it collapsed. The host was amazed and dumb-struck.

Elsewhere, a same-line collocation of ἀντικρὺ and τάμε describes the death of Pedaeus (Il. 5.74), and a same-line collocation of ἀντικρὺ and ἡλθεῖν describes the death of Phereclus (Il. 5.67), Hector (Il. 22.327), and Euphorbus (Il. 17.49). Moreover, the phrase αὐχέν’ ἀπεκρέμασεν (23.879) is

---

326 τῆλε δ’ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ... is usually taken to refer to the mast or Meriones (see Richardson 1993 ad 23.880–1), but it more naturally refers to the θυμός. The notion here is that the bird’s spirit flies away, but the body falls to earth. This is exactly what happens in the Virgilian archery contest. The same phrase in Il. 16.117 refers straightforwardly to the agent of the preceding clause, Ajax.

327 ἀντικρὺ δ’ ἀν’ ἑδόνας ὑπὸ γλωσσαν τάμε χαλικός. (Il. 5.74).

328 ἀντικρὺ κατὰ κύστιν ὑπ’ ὀστεῖον ἡλυθ’ ἀκωκή. (Il. 5.67).

329 ἀντικρὺ δ’ ἀπαλοῖο δι’ αὐχένος ἡλυθ’ ἀκωκή. (Il. 22.327 = Il. 17.49 = Od. 22.16). On Euphorbus, see Nickel 2002 and Allan 2005.
reminiscent of Stesichorus’ depiction of Geryon’s death (ἀπέκλινε δ’ ἄρ’ αὐχένα…).330 Line-initial κάππεσε only refers to dead or dying men (Il. 4.523, 5.560, 13.549, 15.538, 16.290, 16.414, 16.580, Od. 22.85), except when Odysseus falls on Ajax’s chest during the wrestling match (Il. 2.728). Finally, the separation of the dove’s spirit and body (ἀωκύς δ’ εἰκ μελέων θυμὸς πτάτο... Il. 23.880) is only paralleled elsewhere in the Iliad in the deaths of Patroclus and Hector, after which their souls flutter away from their limbs before descending into the underworld (ψυχὴ δὲ ἐκ βεθεὼν πταμένη Ἀιδώσε βεβήκει. Il. 16.856 = 22.362). What can one make of the bird, which dies as a person does, with a cord attached to its foot?

Dead and dying heroes are dragged by their feet in Homeric epic, either by their enemies’ hands or by straps attached around their ankles. This process is depicted in the second city on the Shield of Achilles, by a Κήρ (Il. 18.537), and by heroes (Il. 18.540). Within the narrative, Idomeneus drags Othryoneus by his foot (Il. 13.383–4), Trojans attempt to drag away Patroclus’ corpse (Il. 17.277), and Hippothoon attaches a sword-belt to Patroclus’ ankle, in an attempt to drag him off (Il. 17.288–303) before Ajax kills him. Finally, Achilles pierces Hector’s ankles to drag him across the battlefield (Il. 22.396–8).331 The attachment of inanimate cords to ankles to control or guide movement is associated with the deaths of major heroes in the Iliad, including Patroclus and Hector.

Interpreting the pseudo-bird omen of Iliad 23 “enigmatically,” along the lines of the bird omens in books 2 and 12 of the Iliad, and bird omens throughout the Odyssey, would therefore place

---


the bird bound by its foot within the wider *topos* of heroes being dragged by their feet. There are four items which link the bird’s death closely to that of Hector. First, the bird’s foot is attached by a cord to a ship’s mast, and Hector’s feet are attached by a cord to a chariot’s harness. Second, a line-initial adverb ἀντικρυ, which describes the path of the killing blow, describes both the death of the bird and the death of Hector. Third, the dove’s soul flutters away from its body, just as Hector’s did. Fourth, and most importantly, Hector is explicitly compared to a “quivering dove” in *Iliad* book 22, the only other occurrence of this phrase in the *Iliad*:312

Πηλείδης δ’ ἐπόρουσε ποσὶ κραιτνοίσι πεποιθώς. ἡ ἅτε κίρκος ὑφεσιν ἐλαφρότατος πετεηνῶν ῥηΐδιως ἀναστήσατο μετά τρήρωνα πέλειαν. ἢ δὲ θ’ ὑπαίθα φοβεῖται, ὣ δ’ ἐγγύθεν ἔξω λεληκώς ταρφέ’ ἐπάδουσι, ἐλεεῖν τέ ἡθικὸς ἀνώγει: ὡς ἢ χριστειῶσι τὶς πέτετο, τρεῖς δ’ ἔκτωρ τεῖχος ὧπ’ Τρώων, λαψήρα δὲ γούνατ’ ἐνώμα.

*Il.* 22.138–44

And Achilles darted onwards, trusting in his agile feet. Just as a hawk in the mountains, quickest of birds darts easily after a quivering dove, and it flees from below, but the hawk sharply shrieking close-by darts upon it repeatedly, and its heart commands it to grab it, so Achilles eagerly flew straight on, and Hector fled under the wall of the Trojans, and plied his swift knees.

Here, Achilles is the hawk (κίρκος), and Hector is the “quivering dove” (τρήρωνα πέλειαν). Therefore, we can see the dove’s death as a representation of the death of Hector in the previous book. However, can it also refer proleptically to a death in the Trojan cycle?

312 The athematic noun πελειάς, ἀδός appears when the movement of Hera and Athena is compared to that of quivering doves: αἱ δὲ βάτην τρήρωσι πελειάσιν ὡμαθ’ ἐμοίαι (*Il.* 5.778).
The following is Jonathan Burgess’ account of Achilles’ death (2009, 13): “A likely solution is that an initial lower wound served to slow down the famously swift-footed hero before he was finished off by a second wound.” As support for this, he cites the 6th century iconographic representation of dead Achilles with two arrow wounds: a pierced foot (presumably) fatal rib-cage wound, on a (lost) Chalcidian amphora (LIMC, “Achilleus,” no. 850 * = “Alexandros” no. 90). On the amphora, Ajax stabs Glauclus as he attempts to attach a strap around Achilles’ ankle.

If Achilles dies by two wounds, the parallelism between the death of the dove and Achilles is rather overt: Teucer’s arrow severs the cord attached to the foot, and Meriones, guided by Apollo, pierces the flying dove under its wing (ὑπὸ πτέρυγος), killing it. According to Proclus’ summary of the Aethiopis, the archer Paris and archer-god Apollo kill Achilles, potentially with two arrow shots, one to the foot, and one to the chest. The maiming of Achilles’ leg makes his piercing of Hector’s ankles all the more evocative of his own fate at the hands of Paris and Apollo. It is further suggestive that Xenophon’s term for the cuirass plate is precisely πτέρυξ (Anab. 4.7.15). Shooting a bird “under its wing” (ὑπὸ πτέρυγος), at least by the time of Xenophon, is phraseologically identical to shooting a soldier “under his cuirass plate.” This, according to the line of thinking advanced above, is exactly where Achilles was dealt his fatal blow. A further point remains; the Iliad seems, at the very least, to...
pun on the “Pelean spear” by juxtaposing it with phonemically similar words in describing Patroclus’ inability to wield Achilles’ weapon:335

Alone the spear of blameless Achilles Patroclus did not seize, heavy, huge, and dense, which none other of the Achaeans was able to wield, but only Achilles alone knew how to wield it, the Pelian ash-spear, which once Chiron give to his father from the peak of Mt. Pelion, to be a bane for heroes.

This passage features the repeated syllable of πηλ–/παλ–, linking Achilles’ Pelian spear (Πηλιάς) with the mountain Pelion (Πήλιον) on which its arboreal material grew,336 the technique with which the spear is associated (πάλλειν, πῆλαί), and (although not named in this passage) the man who fathered Achilles, Peleus (Πελίης). Relevant to the archery contest are the first three syllables of Achilles’ patronymics Πηλεΐδης and Πηλεΐων, phonemically reminiscent of the Homeric word for dove, πέλεια. Therefore, the dove dies as Achilles does, while potentially punning on his patronymic. If the external audience is meant to conceptualize the death of the dove as an enigma, it represents a complex, metaphorical representation of the deaths of Hector and Achilles.

Virgil, it seems, interpreted the Iliadic episode in exactly this way, and made his own archery contest both analeptic and propleptic of deaths in the Aeneid. In the archery contest of the

---

336 Serving as etymological basis of the adjective Πηλιάς.
anniversary funeral games for Anchises in book 5, Aeneas organizes an event that is almost entirely identical to that of the *Iliad*, except for its inclusion of four contestants:

Along with the screech of the string, the first arrow of young Hippocoon strikes apart the swift breezes; and it arrives, fixed in the wood of the opposing mast. The mast shudders, and the bird, terrified, darts away with its wings, and everything resounds with enormous applause (and the flapping of wings). Afterwards, sharp Mnestheus stands forth after taking his bow, seeking the heavens, and he stretches his eyes and bow simultaneously. But he, pitiable, was not able to touch that bird with iron: he snaps the cords and linen chains, by which the bird was hanging from the tall mast by its foot: that bird flees the south wind while flying into dark clouds. Then quickly, already holding for a while the ready arrow on his stretched bow, Eurytios called on his brother in prayer, having spied the happy bird in an empty sky, and he transfixes the dove, flapping with its wings under a dark cloud. It falls lifeless, and it leaves its spirit in the heavenly stars, and having fallen it returns the piercing arrow with it.
Although largely similar, the *Aeneid*’s archery contest differs from the *Iliad*’s in the first shot, which strikes the mast and terrifies the bird before the ensuing two shots that largely replicate the two Homeric shots. Moreover, the fourth arrow, shot by Acestes in Virgil’s contest, occurs after the death of the *columba*, and features an overt portent, insofar as the arrow transforms into a flaming comet (*Aen.* 5.519–28). Aeneas interprets it positively, and this overt portent is a likely indication of a Virgilian commentary on the implicit, “portentious” archery contest of the *Iliad*. I argued above that the death of the dove in the *Iliad* was proleptic of Achilles’ death, and Virgil, presumably operating with this same notion, makes his dove die as Turnus will. Crucially, the addition to the *Aeneid*’s contest, namely the dove being terrified before death, directly corresponds to the first stage of Turnus’ death, wherein he is terrified by the avian *Dirae* sent by Zeus. There are, broadly speaking, three correspondences between the deaths of the dove and Turnus. First, Hippocoon’s arrow hits the mast, terrifying the dove (*Aen.* 5.505–6), which is parallel to Zeus’ sending the avian *Dirae*, which terrify Juturna and Turnus (*Aen.* 12.843–886). Second, Mnestheus’ arrow snaps the cord attached to the dove’s foot (*Aen.* 5.507–12), and Aeneas maims Turnus’ leg (*Aen.* 12.926–7). Third, Eurytion’s arrow kills the dove (*Aen.* 5.513–18), and Aeneas buries his sword in Turnus’ chest (*Aen.* 12.950). Turnus’ death has been

---


338 On the similarities between the arrow in 5 and the *Dira* in *Aeneid* 12, see Lawler 1988, 103–4, especially the late omens presaged by the arrow (*sera* omnia, *Aen.* 5.524) compared to the *Dira* (nocte sedens *serum* canit importuna per umbras, *Aen.* 12.864). This “lateness” must be connected with the τέρας δύσμων ὀψιθέσσαν of *Iliad* 2.325. Fratantuono and Smith 2015 ad *Aen.* 5.524, citing Evander reference to Pallas (*sera* voluptas, *Aen.* 8.581) and Euryalus’ mother’s reference to her son (*sera* requies, *Aen.* 9.481), conclude: “the ‘late omens’ may point to the premature death of the young who were the late joys and consolations of their parents’ lives.” One might add to this the description of Silvius Aeneas (silvius, Albanum nomen, tua postuma proles, / quem tibi longaevo *serum* Lavina coniunx / educt silvis regem regumque parentem... *Aen.* 6:763–5) on which see Horsfall 2013 ad loc. The notion here would be that Aeneas has died before Silvius’ birth, making the son both posthumous and “late” due to Aeneas’ death, on which see *infra* n.348.
analyzed as a combination of Hector’s death and (a failed version of) Priam’s supplication of Achilles. What to my knowledge has not been observed is how Turnus dies as Achilles does, with his leg disabled, unable to move. Therefore, if Virgil interpreted the dove’s death in book 23 of the *Iliad* as representing the deaths of Hector and Achilles, it would follow that he would represent the death of a dove in the *Aeneid* as corresponding to the death of Turnus, called *alius...Achilles* (*Aen*. 6.89), “a different Achilles” by the Sibyl. In so doing, Virgil enacts, and transforms, his own critical interpretation of Homeric poetry, and Turnus’ death is a complex blend of Hector’s and Achilles’.

This is not the only fatal prolepsis signified by the dove’s death. There are overt lexical parallelisms between the snapping of the cord attached to the dove’s foot and Amata’s suicide by hanging: the liberation of the bird (*ast ipsam miserandus avem contingere ferro / non valuit: nodos et vincula linea rupit, / quis innexa pedem malo pendebat ab alto*, *Aen*. 5.509–11), is proleptic of Amata’s desperate end (*...et nodum informis leti trabe nectit ab alta*, *Aen*. 12.603). As the dove is freed from the cord, so Amata is undone by it.

---

339 See Knauer 1964a, 431 on the Priam-Turnus connection; see Barchiesi 2015, 19–32, 83–93 on Hector’s death as positive and negative model for Turnus’, and Turnus’ plea as echoing Priam’s. See also Tarrant 2012, 327.

340 See Traina 1989 on this phrase.

341 My conceptualization of Virgil’s relationship to Homer owes much to the method of Alessandro Barchiesi, conveniently outlined in Barchiesi 2015, 115–31. Dekel 2012 is very much in this tradition, but I share Barchiesi’s hesitation to follow Dekel (2012) and Cairns (1989, 177–214) in throwing out entirely the notion of Odyssean and Iliadic halves of the *Aeneid*.

342 This death is often compared to female suicides in tragedies, such as those of Jocasta and Phaedra, see Tarrant 2012 *ad* 12.603. One might also connect this episode to Odysseus’ killing of the twelve maids by hanging (*Od*. 22.465–73), who are compared to thrushes or doves that are caught in a snare hidden in a thicket while they hurry to their abode. In this case, the similarities between the deaths of the dove and Amata would represent a fragmentation of the brutal fate of the maids and their simile. On this passage’s importance for characterizations of transgressive femininity in the *Odyssey*, see Fulkerson 2002.
Finally, one might note the striking vertical separation of the dove’s body and soul after death, to my knowledge only described in the narrative of the *Aeneid* three times: in the deaths of the dove, Camilla, and Turnus. This triple pattern replicates that of the *Iliad*, in which only Patroclus, Hector, and the dove have a similarly “fluttering” spirit. In the *Aeneid*, the dove’s spirit is left among the stars while its corporeal form falls lifeless to the ground: *decidit exanimis, vitamque reliquit in aethereis, fixamque reft delapsa sagittam* (*Aen.* 5.517–18); in this respect, its death presages that of the warrior-princess Camilla:

...tum frigida toto
Paulatim exsoluit se corpore, lentaque colla
Et captum leto posuit caput, arma relinquens,
Vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras.
Tum vero immensus surgens ferit aurea clamor sidera: deiecta crudescit pugna Camilla...

*Aen.* 11.828–33

Then she, chilled, bit by bit loosened herself from her entire body,
And she drooped her soft neck and head overcome by death, abandoning her weapons,
And her life flees with a groan under the shadows, resentful.
Then truly a huge shout rising strikes the golden stars:
Once Camilla was struck down, the fighting became gory...

Here Camilla, in contrast to the dove, dies a slow and painful death, with her life slowly ebbing away, and her neck drooping as her weapons fall from her weakening grasp. Specifically, the focus on Camilla’s neck, *lenta...colla...posuit* recalls the drooping neck of the dying dove in the *Iliad’s* archery contest, which remains absent from the *Aeneid’s*. In terms of further Iliadic resonances, her death occurs soon after a simile (*Aen.* 11.718–24) which is a clear reworking of the simile describing Achilles (hawk) chasing Hector (dove) in book 22 of the *Iliad*. Camilla’s simile (*Aen.* 11.718–24) describes her as a

---

341 See Horsfall 2003, 438. See above on *Il.* 23.879, referring to the dove, with discussion of *αὐχέν’ ἀπεκρέμασεν.*
hawk (*accipiter*) chasing a dove (*columba*); in a marked gender-swap, a female warrior is compared to a male bird, pursuing (and overtaking) a “son of Aunus,” who flees on his horse, and is likened to a traditionally female bird, associated with Venus. Moreover, Arruns prays to Apollo before throwing his spear at Camilla (*Aen. 11.784–93*), fatally wounding her, just as Meriones prayed to Apollo before killing the dove in the *Iliad*, and presumably, just as Paris prayed to Apollo before killing Achilles. Finally, the exceptional vertical separation of Camilla’s body and spirit (*…vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras. Aen. 11.831*) is a spatial inversion of the dove’s death, insofar as the dove’s body falls to earth as its spirit rises airily to the heavens, while Camilla’s soul descends gloomily below the earth. Moreover, it proleptically refers to the death of Turnus. Camilla’s death, then, draws simultaneously on those of both doves, in the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*.

In Turnus’ case, body and soul likewise separate: *Ast illi solvuntur frigore membra / vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras* (*Aen. 12.951–2*). The spatial relationship between body and soul is, like that of Camilla’s, a mirror-image of the dove’s death, yet in this case the polarity of freedom and fixity of movement are inverted as well. The dove’s spirit ascends, seemingly liberated, as its body falls to the ground, while Turnus’ body is pinned to the ground by Aeneas’ sword, his soul groaning as it flees underneath the shadows.

To conclude, the dove, Camilla, and Turnus are the only three beings in the *Aeneid* to be killed and have an explicit, vertical separation of body and soul. Therefore, it seems that the death of Virgil’s dove proleptically refers, in various and complex ways, to the deaths of Camilla, Amata, and

344 See for example Aeneas’ recognition of his mother’s birds at *Aen. 6.139*.

Turnus, and is therefore consistent with the Iliadic dove’s correspondence to Hector and Achilles.

Virgil seems to have understood the archery contest of the Iliadic funeral games to be fruitfully interpreted by enigma, or by Virgil’s time, “allegory.”

As Hector’s death occurs one book prior to the pseudo-omen of the dove’s death in the archery contest, so there is a death prior to the games of Aeneid 5 that shares close verbal parallels to the omen of the archery contest. This is the death of Dido at the end of Aeneid 4:

Tum Iuno omnipotens longum miserata dolorem
difficilisque obitus Irim demisit Olympos
quae luctantem animam nexosque resolveret artus.
nam quia nec fato merita nec morte peribat,
sed misera ante diem subitoque accensa furore,
nondum illi flavum Proserpina vertice crinem
abstulerat Stygioque caput damnaverat Orco.

ergo Iris croceis per caelum roscida pennis
mille trahens varios adverso sole colores
devolat et supra caput asstitit. “hunc ego Diti
sacrum iussa fero teque isto corpore solvo.”
sic ait et dextra crinem secat, omnis et una
dilapsus calor atque in ventos vita recessit.

Aen. 4.693–705

Then all-powerful Juno pitied her lengthy suffering and arduous death, and sent down Iris from Olympus to release her struggling spirit and bound limbs. For she was not perishing by destiny nor by a deserved death, but pitable before her day and goaded by sudden rage; not yet had Proserpina removed her tawny lock, and condemned her head to Stygian Orcus. Therefore dewy Iris flies down through the sky on yellow pinyons drawing many thousand colors while opposite to the sun, and stands above her head. “I bear this lock dedicated to Dis as ordered, and I loosen you from that body. So she speaks and cuts the lock with her right hand, and at once and entirely, her warmth collapsed and her life receded into the winds.
The winged goddess Iris is sent by Hera on a mission of mercy to release Dido from her badly wounded body, immobilized upon the burning pyre. Rather than burning to death, Dido’s suffering is cut short by divine intervention. Iris’ purpose of loosening Dido’s bound limbs (\textit{nexosque resolveret artus. Aen. 4.695}) already presages the dove bound (\textit{innexa, Aen. 5.511}) to the ship’s mast, and temporarily freed by the second arrow. These similarities are somewhat general and not particularly probative for a direct textual relationship. However, vastly more specific are the textual similarities between Dido’s death and the appearance of Acestes’ flaming arrow which appears after the dove’s death. Firstly, the comparison of Acestes’ flaming arrow to shooting stars, with their tails represented as a “lock of hair” (\textit{crinemque volantia sidera ducunt. Aen. 5.528}), directly recalls Iris’ shearing of Dido’s lock of hair (\textit{sic ait et dextra crinem secat... Aen. 4.704}) as an offering to Dis. Secondly, the arrow’s earlier disappearance (\textit{tenuisque recessit / consumpta in ventos... Aen. 5.526–7}) likewise explicitly recalls the final moments of Dido’s death afforded by Iris’ intervention (\textit{omnis et una / dilapsus calor atque in ventos vita recessit. Aen. 5.704–5}).

This hermeneutical approach has implications for a famously opaque omen in Apollonius Rhodius’ \textit{Argonautica}. In the third book, Argus discusses how he will try to convince his mother, Chalciope, to bring Medea over to their cause (\textit{Arg. 3.523–39}). He hopes that this action will be divinely sanctioned (\textit{σὺν δαίμονι, Arg. 3.539}), and immediately thereafter, an omen appears, in which a hawk chases a dove. The dove falls into the lap of Jason, while the hawk impales itself on sternpost:

\begin{verbatim}
ὡς φάτω· τοῖσι δὲ σήμα θεοὶ δόσαν εὐμενέοντες,
τρήρων μὲν φεῦγουσα βὴν κερκια πελείας
 ὑψόθεν Αἰσιοίδεω περφοβημένῃ ἐμπεσε κάλποις,
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{346} In this regard, I find the alleged parallels adduced by Fratantuono 2010 between the flaming arrow and the death of Pallas to be far too indirect and elliptical. If anything, Pallas’ death is remarkable for its dissimilarity to the archery contest.
κίρκος δ’ ἀφλάστῳ περικάππεσεν.

Arg. 3.540–3

So he spoke, and the well-disposed divinities gave them a sign:
a quivering dove, fleeing the violence of a hawk,
fell, terrified, into the lap of Jason from above,
and the hawk impaled itself on the stern-post.

Mopsus the seer offers an interpretation of this omen that seeks to reconcile it with the earlier
prophesy of Phineus, which said that the key to the Argonauts’ return would be the aid of
Aphrodite.347 Mopsus interprets the survival of the dove, as the bird of Aphrodite, as signaling that
Medea will agree to help the Argonauts (Arg. 3.543–54), presumably due to the goddess’ influence. He
says nothing of the hawk. Moreover, his claim that there is no better way to respond to this omen (σοδὲ
τῇ ἐλλως ἔστιν ὑποκρίνασθαι ἄρσιον, Arg. 3.546) is reminiscent of Polydamas’ claim of expertise in book
12 of the Iliad, and is likewise met with a dismissive response. In Polydamas’ case, it was Hector who
criticized the usefulness of bird omens. In the Argonautica, Mopsus receives a sharp rebuke from Idas,
who both claims that bird omens are useless, and censures the Argonauts for aligning themselves with
Aphrodite in taking the “feminine” approach of persuasion to the trials of Aeetes rather than engaging
in open warfare as Ares would (Arg. 3.556–63).348 Mopsus’ claim of superiority, and his omission of the
hawk from his oracular response, invite an alternative interpretation. Above we have seen a Homeric
simile featuring a hawk and dove, representing Achilles and Hector respectively (Il. 22.138–44), as well
as the dove of the archery contest, whose death potentially represents the demises of Hector and

---

347 On Aphrodite’s role in Arg. 3, see Berkowitz 1989, 130–2. This omen has clear parallels to the simile of Hector and
Achilles as dove and hawk (Il. 22.138–44), as well as to the Iliad’s archery contest, in which the dove falls upon the mast of a
ship.

348 See Hunter 1989 ad 3.556 for the connection between Idas and Hector.
Achilles (Il. 23.865–81). Book 1 of the Argonautica features the only other passage in which these birds in tandem are compared to people, when the Minyans who flee the Argonauts are compared to doves retreating from hawks (Arg. 1.1049–50). So while one might reasonably interpret the dove as representing Medea and the hawk as representing Aeetes, the text of the Argonautica offers a potential connection between the hawk and an Argonaut. As it happens, there is an earlier tradition that includes an Argonaut’s death due to the Argo, just as the hawk is killed by impaling itself on the Argo’s stern-post. In Euripides’ Medea, the eponymous protagonist foretells Jason’s death:

σὺ δ’, ὥσπερ εἰκός, κατθάνῃ κακὸς κακῶς,
 Αργοῦς κάρα σὸν λειψάνῳ πεπληγμένος,
 πικρὰς τελευτὰς τῶν ἐμῶν γάμων ἰδών.
Eur. Med. 1386–8

And you, fittingly, an evil man will die badly, struck on the head by a piece of the Argo after seeing the bitter end of my marriage.

Apollonius, then, in designing the omen to include two birds, and having Mopsus respond only to the dove, invites the audience to recognize Jason’s death in the grisly fate of the hawk. Both are killed by the Argo, the hawk by falling onto it, and Jason by having it fall on him. The omen of Argonautica book 3 likely indicates that Apollonius was familiar with the archery contest of Iliad 23, which similarly featured a bird dying on the mast of a ship. If the Iliad’s dove represents the death of Achilles, and the

---

349 On alternative interpretations of the dove, see Hunter 1989 ad 3.540–4, which summarizes three positions: (1) Mopsus’ connection of Aphrodite with the dove is correct; (2) the dove represents Medea (cf. Val. Arg. 8.32–5); (3) the dove represents the Argonauts, just as the dove recommended by Phineus successfully passed through the Symplegades, presaging the Argo’s own successful voyage (Arg. 2.555–73). Knight 1995, 179 connects the hawk (χιπετε) to Circe.

350 On Jason’s death by the object with which he is so closely associated, see Griffith 2016, 538. For an elaborated version of Jason’s death, see the report of Staphylus of Naukratis (FGrH 269 F 11).

351 One might wonder at the fact that the dove falls into his lap.
Argonautica’s hawk represents that of Jason, a further parallelism emerges. Although both men recognize the miraculous nature of the events occurring before them, they cannot recognize the omens as presaging their own deaths.  

Earlier in this chapter, I referenced Gregory Nagy’s argument that an αἶνος spoken by one character to another is a socially specific, encoded message. Furthermore, to interpret the message, one must be a dear friend, φίλος, wise, σοφός, as well as noble, ἀγαθός. That the external audience is similarly drawn into this hermeneutic class is potentially indicative of an Iliadic strategy wherein the external audience, or at least those in the know, can understand themselves as φίλοι, σοφοί, and ἀγαθοί within the system of Homeric basileutic and competitive ethics. Therefore, I conclude that the Homeric poems not only presuppose enigmatic interpretation, but encourage it as a hermeneutic process that mentally links poet and audience. It seems Apollonius and Virgil understood as much.

A Cognitive-Linguistic Appendix

Modern theoretical treatments of allegory are extensive and varied. When one allegorizes, are the cognitive processes involved related to metaphor, metonymy, or is allegory fundamentally different? A popular way of understanding allegory is as an “extended metaphor,” and this approach dates back to Quintilian, who claims that continuous metaphor becomes allegory or enigma. On

---

352 In this regard, one wonders if the dove in the Aeneid, and its associated flaming arrow, are meant to draw a line through the deaths of Dido, Camilla, Amata, and Turnus, to that of Aeneas, on which see Kepple 1976. For traditions of Aeneas’ disappearance, see Serv. ad Aen. 4.620: Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 1.64.4.

353 See n.287 supra.

354 See n.276 supra for a useful introduction to cognitive theories of allegory and how they relate to those of Paul de Man and other 20th century literary critics.

355 ...continus vero in allegorias et aenigmata exit (Inst. Orat. 8.6.14).
closer examination, this definition seems inadequate. Peter Crisp has devoted considerable attention to teasing out the distinctions between allegory and extended metaphor, insofar as allegory’s source domain involves a fictional reality or imagined situation. A short-hand for this would be to say that allegory is a hermeneutic application of metaphor, and that an allegorical work can be described as one with an imagined audience who will understand the work by applying metaphor to it, thereby imagining the work itself to be a source to an unnamed target that exists outside of it. Michael Sinding, in emphasizing the complexity of allegory, has analyzed it in terms of Fauconnier and Turner’s “Blending Theory,” which posits multiple conceptual inputs that blend using the processes of composition, completion, and elaboration. His definition of allegory is “...a metaphoric blend that can be manipulated independently, because it is oriented to a topic space which it reconceptualizes and comments on.” This is crucially from the perspective of an author who images audience members who will replicate his/her cognitive strategy of composition in their sense-making. What is at issue here is imagining the minds of others. As Peter Stockwell has emphasized, an audience’s imagination of an author’s intent is the same cognitive process with which we imagine the intent of those whom we encounter in our daily lives. From the perspective of lived experience, we impute motive and intent to people far more often than we ask for an explanation of their action or a confirmation of their intent. Likewise, an author’s imagination of an audience consists of the same process. There is a tradition of insisting on a terminological distinction between “allegory” as a mode of composition and

---

356 See Crisp 2008. For more on cognitive allegory, see Crisp 2005a; 2005b.
357 Sinding 2002.
358 Ibid. 509.
359 See Stockwell 2016.
“allegoresis” as a mode of interpretation. This is potentially helpful, but runs the risk of effacing the complexities of imagining the minds of others. For example, we may learn that a Homeric exegete professes to interpret Homer allegorically without supposing that Homer intended to compose an allegory. Here we can take the word of the exegete that he is applying “allegoresis” to a work that he imagines to be that of an individual Homeric mind, and which he does not imagine to be “allegory.” His interpretative method is necessary, he believes, because Homeric poetry contains divine philosophical truths that are outside of the author’s control. Yet, as I have argued above, one or more Homers did intend us to interpret the Iliad’s archery contest allegorically. This is my construction of a collective-individual Homeric mind and its intent. The composition of “allegory” presupposes an audience that can use “allegoresis,” and “allegoresis” may or may not presuppose an author who composes an “allegory.” Then, there are various levels of authorial signaling of “allegory,” and presumably the author’s desire for the audience to use “allegoresis.” In the case of John Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress, the various personifications of vices and virtues (“Prudence,” “Wanton,” etc.) indicate by their names what Bunyan wants the reader to understand; the allegory is obvious and does not demand much of the reader, nor does it leave much room for interpretation. On the one hand, an author such as C. S. Lewis can insist that his creation, Aslan the lion, is not an allegory of Christ, despite the interpretation of many readers of The Chronicles of Narnia:

“If Aslan represented the immaterial Deity in the same way in which Giant Despair [a character in The Pilgrim’s Progress] represents despair, he would be an allegorical figure. In reality, he is an invention giving an imaginary answer to the question, ‘What might Christ become like, if there really were a

---

360 Recently, Domaradzki 2015.
world like Narnia and He chose to be incarnate and die and rise again in that world as He actually has
done in ours?’ This is not allegory at all.”

In light of the above, we might see that what Lewis considered to be a competing explanation
is in fact perfectly consistent with a cognitive account of allegory. Lewis potentially confused degree
and kind: Giant Despair is likewise an invention giving an imaginary answer to a question, “What
would despair be if personified?” That the name “Giant Despair” makes this question nearly inevitable
does not change the nature and existence of the question. Lewis used allegory while believing that he
did not. This is all to say that using two terms, “allegory” and “allegoresis,” in introducing a distinction
between composition and analysis, potentially ignores the necessary imagining of the author’s mind by
the audience, and the audiences’ mind(s) by the author. As the example of C.S. Lewis shows, allegory is
a complex hermeneutic process that is also highly individualized; what is a convincing allegory to some,
will be absurd, offensive, or invisible to others. This chapter, itself an exercise in allegory, has hopefully
convinced at least as much as it has rankled.

In applying conceptual allegory to works from the ancient world, one might profitably use the
test-case of animal fables, as found in the Sanskrit Pañcatantra and Hitopadesa, the Pali/Sanskrit
Jātaka tales of the Buddha, or the Greco-Roman Aesopic traditions. In these traditions the animals
(source) are often imagined as people (external target), and this is implicit in the generic conventions.
Future human action in the world of the audience is to be modelled, positively or negatively, on the
imagined, often timeless, world of the animals in the fable. Sometimes, the conceptual solution (or

---

361 In a letter addressed to Mrs. Hook (29 December 1958); see the edition of Hooper 2007, 1004.

362 The connection between metaphor, fable, and the creation/construal of meaning runs throughout Vico’s work, e.g.
“moral”) of the fable is made explicit by a simile or gloss that ends the fable, some morals being more abstract, some more explicit. A particularly complex example of a fable is the famous hawk and nightingale episode in Hesiod’s *Erga* (203–12), in which the raptor chides the captured and terrified songbird for not being resigned to its fate at the hands (or talons, in this case) of its stronger avian counterpart. This is the oldest recorded “fable” in Greek poetry, and is described by Hesiod as an *αἶνος* (202), an appropriate designation given the riddling and enigmatic nature of the tale. It is left unsaid to whom these birds correspond in the Hesiod’s story-world, or the real-world, leading to scholarly debate since antiquity. The fable’s meaning is further complicated by its ending with the hawk’s speech, and with no narration of whether the nightingale is eaten, escapes, or is somehow victorious. Moreover, Hesiod’s indication that this fable is for “thoughtful kings” (202) mirrors his ensuing address to his brother Perses (213–24), in which the depiction of personified Justice uses language that casts her as a retributive counterpart to the nightingale. Regarding Hesiod’s use of these birds in his fable, we might note that the difference between fable and omen, which features prominently in the *Iliad* and especially the *Odyssey*, is the context, “literary” vs. “real,” rather than any difference in hermeneutic method.

---

363 According to the ancient *progymnasmata*, on which see Kennedy 2003, *προμύθιον* is the moral that precedes the fable, and the *ἐπιμύθιον* is that which follows.

364 See Steiner 2012, 1–11 for an argument (with summary of previous approaches) that the birds are polysemous, with the hawk representing the kings, Perses, and Homeric poetic discourse, and the nightingale representing Hesiod and his poetic style (with its belated victory).


Bell, A. 2016. “‘I felt like I’d stepped out of a different reality’: Possible Worlds Theory, Metalepsis and Digital Fiction.” In Gavins, Lahey (eds.), 15–32.


Burkert, W. “Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual.” *GRBS* 7, 87–121.


Forte, A. S. W. (in prep.) *Repetitions of Composition and Epic Intertextuality*.


McRae, K. and Matsuki, K. 2009. “People Use Their Knowledge of Common Events to Understand Language, and Do so as Quickly as Possible.” *Language and Linguistics Compass* 3(6), 1417–29.


Nieto Hernández, P. 2017 (fthc.). Philo of Alexandria and the Allegorical Interpretation of Myths.


178


Skjærø, P. O. fthc. *Poetic Imagery in the Avestan Gathas*.


Sweetser, E. 1990. From Etymology to Pragmatics. Cambridge: CUP.


