

At first glance, the claims on Homer's behalf seem exaggerated. As Aloni notes, the incidents alluded to—the death of Achilles, the fall and sack of Troy, and the returns of the heroes—are actually not recounted in Homer.⁴ Yet there is no reason to think that Simonides ascribed an *Iliou Persis* to Homer. To be sure, by exaggerating Homer's accomplishment, Simonides can rhetorically magnify his own. As Homer granted immortal fame to the heroes, so too will Simonides to the Plataean heroes he celebrates.

Lloyd-Jones has observed that the diction of these lines is peculiarly evocative of the epic, both in the choice of ἀοίδιμος, a Homeric *hapax*, which occurs when Helen tells Hector that Zeus set an evil destiny upon herself and Paris, to make them ἀοίδιμοι for men to come (*Il.* 6.357–58), as well as the epithet ὠκύμορος, which in four out of its five occurrences is used by Thetis of her son.⁵ For Simonides, not just Achilles but the whole race of the heroes is ὠκύμορος. As he says in his *Threnoi* (523 PMG):

†οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ πρότερόν ποτ' ἐπέλοντο,
θεῶν δ' ἐξ ἀνάκτων ἐγένονθ' υἱες ἡμίθεοι,
ἄπονον οὐδ' ἄφθιτον οὐδ' ἀκίνδυνον βίον
ἐς γῆρας ἐξίκοντο τελέσαντες.†

In addition to the many verbal echoes of Homer that have already been observed by others, fr. 11 as a whole contains another, I believe more precise, allusion. The two passages are linked not only by the similarity of their contents, but also by the term ἡμίθεος, a *hapax* in Homer and surprisingly rare elsewhere. Hesiod uses it almost as the *terminus technicus* to refer to his fourth race, the race of heroes who fought at Thebes and at Troy: ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων θεῖον γένος, οἱ καλέονται ἡμίθεοι, προτέρη γενεὴ κατ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν (*Works and Days* 159–60).⁶ Similarly, the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* closely links the suitors of Helen and the Trojan War with Zeus' plan to destroy the ψυχὰς ἡμιθέων (fr. 204.100 Merkelbach-West).⁷ In Alcaeus 42.13 Voigt, Achilles is called one of the *hemitheoi*, as is

4 Aloni 1994.15; on differences from Homer, see also Stehle's paper in this volume.

5 Lloyd-Jones 1994.2–3.

6 A. Capra and M. Curti 1995.28–29 argue that ἐπώνυμον in line 13 does not mean “famous” but retains its usual sense. They translate, “The short-lived race, which takes its name from the half-gods,” and supply a verb of singing at the beginning of line 14.

7 For a recent discussion of this controversial fragment, see Koenen 1994.26–34.

one of Alcman's Hippocoontids in the Louvre Partheneion (3.7 Calame). Callinus' praise of the brave warrior implies that, if he survives, he will be ἄξιος ἡμιθέων (1.19 W); he becomes the equal of those legendary heroes of the past. Whenever the term is used in these passages, it suggests a retrospective vision, looking back at the legendary past from the vantage of the present. But the comprehensive vision of the Trojan War with which Simonides brings his proem to a close most closely resembles Homer's similarly synoptic view at the beginning of the twelfth book of the *Iliad*.

In *Iliad* 12, Homer momentarily pulls back from the immediate action on the battle field to distance himself from the heroes who fought before Troy. From that unique vantage, those who participated in the Trojan war belong to an earlier generation and to a different world, the ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν. As he begins his narrative of the assault on the Achaean wall, Homer looks forward to a future time when it will have disappeared (12.10–16):

- 10 ὄφρα μὲν Ἑκτωρ ζωὸς ἔην καὶ μῆνι Ἀχιλλεὺς
καὶ Πριάμοιο ἄνακτος ἀπόρθητος πόλις ἔπλεν,
τόφρα δὲ καὶ μέγα τεῖχος Ἀχαιῶν ἔμπεδον ἦεν.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μὲν Τρώων θάνον ὅσσοι ἄριστοι,
πολλοὶ δ' Ἀργείων οἱ μὲν δάμεν, οἱ δὲ λίποντο,
15 πέρθετο δὲ Πριάμοιο πόλις δεκάτῳ ἐνιαυτῷ,
Ἀργεῖοι δ' ἐν νηυσὶ φίλην ἐς πατρίδ' ἔβησαν . . .

At that point the gods in concert will destroy the wall, κάππεσον ἐν κονίησι καὶ ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν (12.23). In characterizing Homer's accomplishment as making a name among men to come for the ἡμιθέων ὠκύμορον γενεήν, Simonides likewise distances himself from the heroes of Troy and, above all, Achilles. In the next line, the poet will salute Achilles and take his leave of the hero, before turning to the task at hand. In echoing the Homeric passage and in using the expression ἡμίθεοι, Simonides both links himself with, and dissociates himself from, Homer and his subject matter. Troy and the race of the ἡμίθεοι, celebrated by his illustrious predecessor, may be dead and gone, but Simonides will grant the same immortal κλέος to his contemporaries.