

ORALITY, MASCULINITY, AND THE GREEK EPIC

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The distinction between predominantly oral and predominantly literate societies is an important principle of cultural analysis in the West.¹ In anthropological and ethnographic accounts, it constitutes a value-laden dividing line between peoples, one which serves to validate and substantiate the domination of writers and readers over nonwriters and nonreaders. Recent work on the first encounters with the New World, for example, has shown how the Europeans assumed their superiority over the Amerindians not only by reference to this distinction in the abstract, but also by the proliferation of written documents and proclamations which legitimated their official acts of discovery and subjugation.² In literary studies, the distinction begins as a formal one, focused on Greek epic poetry as the product of oral composition and on the distinction between such poetry as the vehicle of preserving cultural *muthoi* and prose as a later, literate mode of recording cultural *data*.³ In both fields, these distinctions have often assumed a reductive and utopian view of oral culture, expressed most conspicuously in the notion of nonliterate noble savages found in earlier

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1 The standard work in English is Ong 1982. On the Greek context, see Havelock 1982 and 1963, also Harris 1989. For summaries of the topic, see the first chapters of Foley 1988, Havelock 1986, and, more recently, Thomas 1992. See also the critique of Havelock in Halverson 1992.

2 Greenblatt 1991.9.

3 Havelock 1986.5–10 and 110–16.

philosophical and anthropological work.⁴ Orality is thus uncertainly positioned in and by the West as a highly literate culture. On the one hand, an earlier and innocent time of pre-textuality assumes a *muthos* or story about what might have been—one which is necessarily undocumented, or rather is documented after the fact. In this *muthos*, what is called primary orality is an ever-receding object of desire, superseded over time by the *realia* of literacy: contemporary nonliterate societies become a footnote to this story since for them it is only a matter of time. As an ironic complement to this *muthos*, faith in literacy as a marker of progress is based on a proliferation of texts (historical, ethnographic, scientific, etc.) which document and substantiate that progress and which are themselves proof of the cultural superiority literacy affords.⁵ At the same time, however, this faith is undermined by a fundamental ambivalence towards writing as both the vehicle and usurper of an orally preserved past; another way of putting it is to say that a utopian view of oral culture is the defining characteristic of literacy's privilege. My purpose in this paper is to discuss the ideological implications of this ambivalence—with its interplay of faith and desire—in the context of Greek epic. I rely on two premises. First, that the domination of formal analyses in Homeric scholarship, together with an artificial distinction between orality and literacy, has generally overshadowed a broader cultural analysis of human communication in the epic narratives. And second, that gender-specific codes and hierarchies operate in every aspect of Greek cultural production.

As the exemplar of what was ostensibly the product of oral composition, Greek epic poetry has occupied a unique position in discussions of orality and literacy in the West.⁶ Eric Havelock put it succinctly when he said that, “The ‘orality question’ . . . from its inception in modern times, has been entangled with the ‘Greek question.’”⁷ The “Greek question,” grounded in Milman Parry's studies of the “acoustic mechanics of oral [or formulaic] verse-making,” is characterized by debates over the paradoxical (or oxymoronic) nature of the Greek epic as oral literature and by the extent to which the process of transforming the epic into a written text may affect the formal properties which also make it oral poetry.

4 Cf. Derrida 1976, esp. 165–268 on Rousseau. Also Havelock 1986.34–43.

5 On cultural authority and ethnographic writing, see Clifford 1988.

6 For a summary of the debates over Homer's text as a product of “primary orality,” see Havelock 1986.11–14.

7 Havelock 1986.37, the first chapter of Foley 1988, and Thomas 1992, esp. the Introduction and chapters 1–3.

Statistical analyses of orality and literacy in ancient Greek society and the historical problem of when and how the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were committed to writing are essential to the “Greek question” as it has been traditionally formulated. The metrical, grammatical, and syntactical arguments that have created the paradox of oral literature and the statistical, historical, and philosophical arguments which follow from them have recently, and persuasively, been called into question.⁸ In general, the distinction between orality and literacy is less absolute than the Greek question has traditionally assumed; it has been shown, for example, that formulaic poetry is not necessarily the product of pre-literate cultures. The Greek question has also tended to ignore how communicative practices operate within the epic narratives at large, that is, how the poems contextualize characters speaking or otherwise communicating with one another. Oral composition as a formal poetic praxis should not be confused with oral speech as a mode of human intercourse, but neither are they mutually exclusive. The poet as an oral composer (e.g., Homer or Demodocus or Phemius) cannot be completely distinguished from the hero as an oral speaker: Odysseus is both when he tells the tale of his wanderings in the *Odyssey*.⁹ In this sense we can say that the medium (the presumed orally composed poem) is part of the message (the presumed valorization of direct oral speech among heroes). This coincidence is less evidence for what Havelock calls an “oral consciousness,” than for how competing modes of human communication function in the discourse of Greek cultural identity.¹⁰

In the texts of Hesiod and Homer, past events are orally transmitted to the poet with divine assistance. In the originary scene of this account, the poet receives and passes on to his auditors word of events worth remembering at the whim of the Muses (*Theogony* 26–35; *Iliad* 1.1, 2.484–93; *Odyssey* 1.1). This is clearly not a representation of everyday verbal intercourse (συνουσία), but a portrait of poetic instruction in the service of

8 Thomas 1992, chapter 3.

9 Cf. Martin 1989.

10 On oral consciousness, see Havelock 1986, chapter 10. Defined as “a system of possibility for knowledge,” Foucault’s term “discourse” addresses “what rules permit certain statements to be made; what rules order these statements; what rules permit us to identify some statements as true and others as false; what rules allow the construction of a map, model or classificatory system; what rules are revealed when an object of discourse is modified or transformed . . . Whenever sets of rules of these kinds can be identified, we are dealing with a discursive formation or discourse,” Mark Philip in Skinner 1985:69. On “discursive formations” see Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge*, chapter 2, discussed by Clifford 1988:270, n. 2.

establishing and maintaining a record of the dominant culture, in other words, in the service of creating a tradition.¹¹ As the medium of this tradition, direct oral transmission is an idealized mode of communication, not only for divinely favored poets, but also among the Greek gods and more-than-mortal Greek heroes about and for whom the epic or didactic poet speaks or sings. In the originary scene, the appeal to divine sanction and to the preservation of the exploits of these gods and heroes makes direct oral transmission a constitutive element of a discourse of legitimate domination.¹² Its premise is obviously agonistic in terms of poetic production: the poet who communicates directly with the Muses is best. What is less obvious is how direct oral transmission is part of a dominant cultural ethos that valorizes masculinity as a set of prescribed behaviors—especially martial behavior—and naturalizes hierarchies of gender and class. This ethos may help to explain the nostalgia for oral culture in the patriarchal and militaristic West.

Like Zeus when he swallows Metis in Hesiod's *Theogony* (886ff.), the narrating *ego* in the originary scene of didactic poetry incorporates his Muse in order to give himself the authority to “spread the fame of past and future” (*Theogony* 32; cf. *Odyssey* 1.1–10).¹³ Another way of putting it is to say that didactic poetry, as the vehicle of communicating and preserving what matters in Archaic Greek culture, originates in a scene of gender-specific domination.¹⁴ This scene includes the poet's profession of his debt to the Muses, but the information for which he is thankful ultimately functions as a self-legitimizing gesture: it would guarantee in advance the truth or persuasiveness of the story he is about to tell. In the *Theogony*, that story culminates in the forcible victory of Zeus over the Olympian and chthonic realms; while the *Iliad* does not end with the victory of the Greeks

11 On a “tradition” as repeated instructions, see Havelock 1986.68–70. He notes that “repetition is linked to a feeling of pleasure, a factor of primary importance in understanding the spell of oral poetry” (71). But an emphasis on pleasure tends to conceal the enforcement of power relations—in terms of gender, class, and ethnicity—that make possible the “spell of oral poetry.” It also participates in the nostalgia for an idealized oral culture. Cf. Thomas 1992.44.

12 The question of whether or not the works of Homer and Hesiod are products of a developing literate culture does not affect this idealization of oral transmission in their narratives, except insofar as that idealization may be an agonistic response to such a development. Cf. Havelock 1986.79–82.

13 For the tradition that Metis is the mother of Homer, see *The Contest of Homer and Hesiod* 314.6.

14 Cf. de Lauretis 1987.

over the Trojans, the larger tradition assumes that outcome.¹⁵ In both texts, poetry is the medium that validates and perpetuates dominant social and political structures among gods and men: Zeus' victory means the defeat of female divinities and monsters;¹⁶ the Greeks' victory means the defeat of the non- or not quite Greek Trojans.

But ambiguity lies at the heart of these originary scenes, perhaps best illustrated by the proem to the *Theogony* (*Theogony* 22–28):

αἴ νύ ποθ' Ἡσίοδον καλὴν ἐδίδαξαν ἀοιδὴν,
 ἄρνας ποιμαίνονθ' Ἑλικῶνος ὑπο ζαθέοιο.
 τόνδε δέ με πρῶτιστα θεαὶ πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπον,
 Μοῦσαι Ὀλυμπιάδες, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο·
 “ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι, κάκ' ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἶον,
 ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
 ἴδμεν δ', εἴτ' ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι.”

These women (the Muses) taught Hesiod a beautiful song
 while he was shepherding his lambs under Holy Helicon.
 And the goddesses first told me this in speech,
 the Muses of Olympus, daughters of Zeus who holds the aegis.
 “Rustic shepherds, things of ill-repute, mere bellies,
 we know how to say many false things that seem like the truth,
 and we know how to utter true things when we wish.”

The Muses are employed here in a diversionary tactic that implies that they may have lied to others (Homer, for example), but they surely will not lie to Hesiod.¹⁷ As mentioned above, a desire for domination operates in the implicit reference to a competitive community of poets; as a narrative strategy, the Muses' first-person address works within this community to foster an intimacy between the poet and the Muses who will breathe into him “a divine voice” (ἐνέπνευσαν δέ μοι αὐδὴν θέσπιν, 31–32). Invective is common in the representation of addresses from gods to men in Greek poetry, as is the self-deprecation of the narrator (see below on *Iliad* 2.484–93). Nonetheless, the Muses' less than complimentary address (“Rustic

15 Likewise, the *Odyssey* culminates with Odysseus' victory over the suitors.

16 The monstrous chthonic realm is, in general, the realm of female power beginning with Gaia.

17 For a discussion of the Muses in Hesiod, see Bassi 1993.13, n. 21.

shepherds, things of ill-repute, mere bellies”) functions rhetorically to give credence to their first-person address by saying what the narrator might be expected to refrain from saying about himself.¹⁸ The slippage between the first and third person in these lines, marked by the switch from “Hesiod” (Ἡσίοδον) in line 22 to “me” (με) in line 24 so that the passage reads “they taught Hesiod and said to me,” is another rhetorical or grammatical gesture toward presence and credibility. The construction may be explained in part by the convention of naming oneself as a seal on the work.¹⁹ In this programmatic utterance, the proper name also constitutes a kind of “reality effect.”²⁰ But the somewhat awkward switch to “me”—what amounts to a dyadic positioning of the narrating *ego*—further the pretense of direct, first-person transmission.²¹ The difference between saying “the Muses said to Hesiod” and “the Muses said to me” is that the latter substantiates their direct speech by vouching for it with the narrator’s *own* first-person presence.²²

The passage thus represents a pretense to direct or face-to-face exchange as the originary or enabling moment of the oral tradition. It is not, after all, the *Muses* who reveal their potential deceptiveness, it is *Hesiod* (or the speaking *ego*) who reveals it while making it seem as if the Muses are talking or, more precisely, that they *did* talk to him in the past.²³ Insofar as

18 Cf. West 1966 on lines 22–23.

19 The question still remains whether or not Hesiod wrote down his poems. West 1966.47–48 believes he did. But see the judicious discussion of Thomas 1992.101–02 and *passim*. If “a recurrent use of this early writing is to mark or protect ownership” (Thomas 1992.58), the fact that Hesiod names himself in his poem may indicate that he was a writer more clearly than the usual stylistic analyses. Cf. West 1966 on line 22 who states that the “poet names himself, speaking in the third person, not to set his signature upon the poem (this cannot have been thought necessary at a time when there was no general circulation of written books), but rather out of simple pride . . .”

20 Barthes 1982.

21 Also operating here is the obvious need for a grammatical signpost, possibly accompanied by gesture or voice-change in oral performance, to mark the introduction of a different speaking subject. First-person speeches in epic and didactic poetry are commonly (if not always) marked off by some form of a verb meaning to speak or answer, followed by τόδε or τόδε. Perhaps the fact that punctuation is only included late in written documents attests to the persistence of such signposts in a performance context. See Immerwahr 1990 and Thomas 1992.92–93.

22 For this scene as a part of Hesiod’s biography, see West 1966.158–61. Cf. *Theog.* 81–103. I should make it clear that I consider the rustic Hesiodic *persona* to be just that, a *persona*. In spite of the fact that Hesiod presents himself as a working shepherd, his poetry functions as part of a hegemonic cultural discourse.

23 This conflation of poet and Muse is lost in analyses which begin by asking whether or not the Muses actually appeared to Hesiod. See West 1966 on lines 22–34.

direct quotation signifies the presence of an always absent speaker, their speech is also an example of false things that can seem like true things in the poem. And in spite of an implicit claim to the contrary, the Muses' utterance ultimately puts the narrator's credibility at risk: if the Muses can lie, they can make a liar out of him. As the first (πρώτιστα) and only words attributed to the Muses in the first person, their speech at this critical moment both endorses direct oral transmission as the vehicle of cultural preservation and undermines that endorsement.

A similarly ambiguous originary scene occurs in the proem to the Catalogue of Ships at *Iliad* 2.484-93:

ἔσπετε νῦν μοι, Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι,
 ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστέ, πάρεστέ τε, ἵστε τε πάντα,
 ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν,
 οἳ τινες ἡγεμόνες Δαναῶν καὶ κοῖρανοι ἦσαν.
 πληθὺν δ' οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω,
 οὐδ' εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλῶσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ' εἶεν,
 φωνὴ δ' ἄρρηκτος, χάλκεον δέ μοι ἦτορ ἐνείη,
 εἰ μὴ Ὀλυμπιάδες Μοῦσαι, Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο
 θυγατέρες, μνησαίαθ' ὅσοι ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθον.
 ἀρχοὺς αὖ νηῶν ἐρέω νῆας τε προπάσας.

Tell me now, you Muses who have your homes on Olympus.
 For you, who are goddesses, are there, and you know all things,
 and we have only heard the report of it and know nothing.
 Who then of those were the chief men and lords of the
 Danaans?

I could neither tell of nor name the multitude,
 not if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, not if I had
 an unbreakable voice and a heart of bronze within me,
 not unless the Muses of Olympia, daughters
 of Zeus of the aegis, remembered all those who came beneath
 Ilion.

I will tell the lords of the ships and the ships' numbers.

In this scene, the Muses' power of memory—one of the principal features of the notion of oral culture—has three related causes: their divinity, their physical presence, and their knowledge of all things (ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστέ, πάρεστέ τε, ἵστε τε πάντα, 485). The relationship of these three is presumably sequential: as divinities their immortality permits them

to be eternally present, which in turn permits them to know everything.²⁴ Although they do not speak to the poet directly here, their eternal and infinite presence is the central feature of this triad, both in the sequence and in importance. In contrast, the mortal poet knows nothing (οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν, 486) because of his physical, i.e., spatial and temporal, limitations.²⁵ His is a position of irredeemable absence from the past events he describes, epitomized first of all in the fundamental ontological difference between himself and the Muses. His lament that even “ten tongues and ten mouths” and “an unbreakable voice and a heart of bronze” are inadequate to speak to the task at hand is a hyperbolic testament to the importance of an enduring physical presence in the discourse of oral memory and transmission.²⁶ The limits of human knowledge are figured as an impossibly monstrous body whose too many mouths and indestructible voice and heart illustrate the fact of mortal insufficiency and lack.²⁷

In both these scenes, the ideally authorizing voice of the Muses operates in the context of a desire for truth and completeness *via* divine presence and direct oral transmission—where desire specifies a necessary lack of fulfillment. And implicit in each is an agonistic response to a developing literate culture, a protestation, however inadequate, of orality’s privilege in the presence of writing. At least we know that alphabetic writing was present in the Greek world during the first half of the eighth century b.c.e.²⁸ But again the question is not whether Hesiod and Homer composed with the aid of writing, or even whether writing constituted some

24 Cf. the speech of the Sirens at *Odyssey* 12.189–91 (Lattimore translation): “We know everything that the Argives and Trojans did and suffered in wide Troy through the gods’ despite. Over all the generous earth we know everything that happens.”

25 Cf. *Odyssey* 8.492–93 where Odysseus praises Demodocus’ song for an accuracy which suggests that the poet had been at Troy himself or heard about it from someone who had been there.

26 See Kirk 1985 on this passage: “Aristarchus (Arn/A) judged the hyperbole to be typically Homeric and compared *Odyssey* 12.78, where Scylla’s cliff is unclimbable ‘even if a man had twenty hands and feet.’” Still each “typically” hyperbolic utterance must be considered in its own particular context. For Kirk, the poet’s physical inability refers only to the number of the troops (ὅσοι, 492) and not to the names of the leaders (οἳ τινες, 487), which the Muses tell him and which he recounts. This distinction is persuasive, but the passage seems less rigorously literal.

27 The metaphorical effect of φωνὴ δ’ ἄρρηκτος, χάλκεον δέ μοι ἦτορ is to give tensile strength to what is incorporeal. ἄρρηκτος is commonly used of strong walls and chains; cf. *Odyssey* 10.3–4 where both adjectives occur together to describe the wall around Aiolos’ island: τεῖχος χάλκεον ἄρρηκτον.

28 Thomas 1992.53. Cf. Kennedy 1986.13.

kind of threat in a predominantly oral society. These originary scenes raise different sorts of questions. What rhetorical purpose is served by the Muses in light of the ambiguity about them? Why is direct oral speech represented as the vehicle of divine omniscience and presence only to be compromised in the confession of human insufficiency and absence? In short, why does the appeal to divine sanction *via* the divine voice seem to “transgress its own system of values?”²⁹

As the framing scenes of Greek epic and didactic poetry, these proemia do not evoke a logocentric ideal, but disenchantment based on two related phenomena: the feminine subjectivity of the Muses and relayed or mediated—as opposed to direct—oral speech.³⁰ In what follows, I will argue that a dominant discourse of direct oral transmission as masculine, truthful, and persuasive is defined in the *Iliad* in opposition to mediated speech (both graphic and oral) as feminine and deceptive or deceptively persuasive. As a consequence, the notion of orality or oral culture at the center of the Greek question, a notion that implicitly posits an unambiguous and eternally authorizing oral subject or agent, is always already an object of desire in the Greek and Western traditions. As I hope to make clear, this conclusion speaks to each of the general assumptions mentioned at the beginning of this paper, namely, the persistence of the *muthos* of an idealized oral culture in the West and the ambivalence toward writing which motivates that persistence.

Moving from the originary scenes of epic and didactic poetry to the epic narratives in general, we find two competing modes of oral communication: direct and mediated. In other words, oral communication does not constitute a unified category but is itself divided into at least two subcategories. The first, direct oral speech, is exemplified by speaking face-to-face or ἀντιβίους ἐπέεσσιν; the second, mediated oral speech, is exemplified by orally delivered messages. It is useful to think about these two sorts of oral speech in the epic for two related reasons. First, it allows for a more detailed analysis of human communication in the archaic context and, second, the oral message renders problematic the strict opposition between orality and literacy by occupying a kind of middle ground.³¹ In order to

29 The quotation is from Spivak's Introduction to Derrida 1976.xlix.

30 Cf. Bergren 1983.

31 See Griffin 1986.48 for a discussion of lexical distinctions between speech and narrative in the epics. Although he distinguishes between the “reported speech of men” and the “impersonal utterance of the bard himself” he does not distinguish between direct and

make this distinction more vivid, the repetition of speeches in the *Iliad*'s message-sending episodes will be referred to below as *scripted speech*, where what distinguishes scripted from non-scripted speech is the acknowledged presence of an original or primary speaker whose words are repeated to an addressee by an intermediary.³² In using the term scripted, I am not proposing any strict historical connection between message-sending in the *Iliad* and the performance of a dramatic script, although I begin with the assumption that they occupy similar communicative categories. Each requires an act of *speaking for* another: a messenger speaks the words of the sender of the message and can be compared to an actor who speaks the words of the playwright. In the case of *verbatim* first-person messages in the epics, the messenger *speaks as* the sender of the message and can be compared to the actor who speaks as his character. Socrates' assertion in Plato's *Ion* that the rhapsode and the actor occupy a middle position is based on the relevant notion that both speak *for* or *as* others and that their intermediate positions put a limit on the truth-value of their utterances.³³ In the epic, the fact that messengers often come in disguise indicates a connection as well between the disguised body (like that of an actor) and mediated or relayed speech; where disguise is overtly marked it is the visual

relayed speeches in the narrative. These strategies are analyzed by de Jong 1987 and Létoublon 1987, but with emphases different from mine. Cf. Manganaro 1992 who, in a discussion of participant observation as an imperative in ethnographic writing, states: "Recent cultural theory has emphasized that this insistence upon an unmediated presentation (versus mediated representation) has motivations and effects other than hermeneutic naïveté, nostalgia, or optimism (though such logocentric impulses do play a part) . . . the "will to truth" is actually a "will to power . . ."

32 Metrical and lexical repetition are descriptive of formulaic texts generally, but I am not talking about motifs or themes specific to repeated phrases or formulae, or about the retelling of events in the narrative. I am talking about the overt repetition of one character's speech by another character acting as an intermediary. See Martin 1989.171ff. on types of repetition in Homer. Also, the discussion in de Jong 1987, chapter 5, *passim* and Appendix V B.

33 *Ion* 535e9–536a1: ὁ δὲ μέσος σὺ ὁ ῥαψωδὸς καὶ ὑποκριτής. The actor can be said to speak for the playwright and, in the first person, as his character in the drama; the rhapsode speaks for the poet and, in the first person, as a particular character in the poem. At *Rep.* 395a8, Socrates also says that men cannot be "reciters and actors at the same time" (Οὐδὲ μὴν ῥαψωδοὶ γε καὶ ὑποκριταὶ ἅμα), but this does not obviate their similarity as middlemen. Intermediacy is also responsible for the diminished truth-value of objects which are only approximations or imitations of the Forms in *Rep.* 10, a discussion that culminates in the expulsion of the tragic poet from the city. A fuller discussion of scripted speech as a category of analysis is to be found in Bassi 1997.

manifestation of the potentially compromised truth-value of the message.³⁴ In order to illustrate this notion of scripted speech, I will begin with a discussion of the only reference to a written or graphic message in the epic.

In Book 6 of the *Iliad*, Glaucus and Diomedes meet as enemies on the battlefield where Glaucus tells the story of his ancestor Bellerophon (6.160–70).³⁵

τῷ δὲ γυνὴ Προΐτου ἐπεμήνατο, δῖ' Ἀντεία,
 κρυπταδίῃ φιλότῃ μιγήμεναι· ἀλλὰ τὸν οὐ τι
 πεῖθ' ἀγαθὰ φρονέοντα, δαΐφρονα Βελλεροφόντην.
 ἢ δὲ ψευσαμένη Προΐτον βασιλῆα προσήύδα·
 “τεθναίης, ὦ Προΐτ', ἢ κάκτανε Βελλεροφόντην,
 ὅς μ' ἔθελεν φιλότῃ μιγήμεναι οὐκ ἔθελούσῃ.”
 ὥς φάτο, τὸν δὲ ἄνακτα χόλος λάβεν οἷον ἄκουσε·
 κτείνειν μὲν ῥ' ἀλέεινε, σεβάσσατο γὰρ τό γε θυμῷ,
 πέμπε δέ μιν Λυκίηνδε, πόρεν δ' ὅ γε σήματα λυγρά,
 γράψας ἐν πίνακι πτυκτῷ θυμοφθόρα πολλά,
 δεῖξαι δ' ἠνώγειν ᾧ πενθερῷ, ὅφρ' ἀπόλοιτο.

Beautiful Anteia the wife of Proetus was mad
 to lie in love with him and yet she could not
 persuade noble Bellerophon, whose thought was virtuous.
 So she lied to Proetus the king and said:
 “Would you be killed, Proetus? Then murder Bellerophon
 who tried to lie with me in love, when I was unwilling.”
 So she spoke, and anger took hold of the king because of her
 story.
 He shrank from killing him, since his heart was awed by such
 action,
 but sent him away to Lycia with murderous symbols,
 which he inscribed in a folding tablet, to destroy his life,
 and told him to show it to his wife's father, so that he would
 perish.

34 E.g., the Dream as Nestor in *Iliad* 2, Iris as Polites (*Iliad* 2.786ff.), and as Laodike (*Iliad* 3.21ff.).

35 Cf. *Iliad* 7. 175ff. where the Achaeans make signs on lots (κλήρον ἐσημήναντο). These symbols or signs, however, are of a different order than the written message in the Bellerophon episode.

Precisely what these “murderous symbols” (σήματα λυγρά, 168) are is unclear. The verb used to indicate how they were put on the tablet (γράφω, 169) later acquires the meaning “to write” in the sense of writing alphabetic characters, but, in the epic, may simply mean to scratch or draw signs.³⁶ In any event, inscribed symbols are the vehicles of private knowledge and deception and are treated with suspicion; more importantly, the narrative associates them with female deception that puts masculine prerogatives at risk.³⁷

36 The symbols may refer to a syllabic script—perhaps a descendant of the Mycenaean Linear B script. See Kirk 1990 ad loc. Or they may refer to a private form of communication between son-in-law and father-in-law, especially since we can infer that if Bellerophon had access to the symbols, he did not understand them; if he had understood them he certainly would not have given them to his would-be murderer. Leaf 1960 ad loc. believes that the fact that Proetus sent the message ἐν πίνακι πτυκτῷ indicates that it was “closed and sealed, and allows us to infer that Bellerophon would have understood the σήματα had they been left open.” But πτυκτός simply means “folded” and not necessarily “sealed.” I think it more likely that Bellerophon is depicted not only as the innocent victim of a woman’s desire (which she would keep secret, κρυπταδίη φιλότητι), but also as innocent of written symbols whose secret message he could not understand. Cf. Harvey 1966.48 with n. 17: “Perhaps he [Homer] even saw writing itself as sinister. He certainly insists on the evilness of Proetus’ letter (θυμοφθόρα πολλά, 169; σήμα κακόν, 178).” Also Heubeck 1979.128–46 on the Bellerophon episode.

37 The fact that Proetus (rather than his wife) writes the message only strengthens this conclusion. The perception of women and writing as a dangerous combination is somewhat obscurely expressed in a comic fragment (Menander, 702 Kock): γυναιχ’ ὁ διδάσκων γράμματ’ [οὐ] καλῶς [ποιεῖ] ἀσπίδι δὲ φοβερᾷ φάρμακον. Edmonds 1961 offers the following less than literal translation: “Who teaches a woman letters does not do well but provides a fearful snake with additional poison.” Although it may be a late interpolation, Herodotus’ story of Gorgo (*Histories* 7.239) can also be mentioned in this context. Upon learning of Xerxes’ intention to invade Greece, Demaratus sends a message to the Spartans telling them of the Persian plan. When the message arrives, Gorgo, the wife of Leonidas, is the only one able to discover the message hidden under the wax layer on the tablet. Although Herodotus does not say that Gorgo could read the message, her ability to find the hidden message demonstrates a link between the potential “hiddenness” of written messages and a woman’s ability to recognize them. In this story, the discovery is beneficial to the Spartans, although Demaratus’ intent in sending it—Herodotus vaguely indicates that he may have treacherous designs against the Persians—again finds a written text in a narrative of deceit and possible danger. See How and Wells 1912 (rpt. 1968) ad loc. Other late examples include two stories from Plutarch (*De mul. virt.* 15 and 17). In the first, the tyrant Aristotimus tries to force the women of Elis to write letters to their husbands to trick them into leaving off fighting. In the second, Polykrite of Miletus saves her friends by sending a note to her brothers inscribed on a piece of lead and hidden inside a cake. Both of these are mentioned by Cole 1981.233. See also Svenbro 1990.382–83 for a discussion of the *ABC Show* or *Grammatike Theoria* by the Athenian poet Kallias (Athen. 7.276a, 10.448b, 453c–454a = Kallias, frag. 31 Edmonds) in which a chorus of twenty-four women represent the Ionian alphabet, although Svenbro’s argument takes no particular

This conclusion is illustrated not only by the obvious physical threat to Bellerophon, but also by Proetus' compromised status—equivalent to his compromised masculinity—in the narrative. His wife's desire for another man, together with her ability to convince him of the truth of what is a lie, undermines his position as husband and king.³⁸ But his decision to send the secret or hidden message signifies a more complex condemnation. Folded within a tablet and calling for Bellerophon's death, the message resonates with Anteia's secret desire for sex with Bellerophon (κρυπταδίη φιλότητι) and is closely aligned in the text with the desires and tactics of the woman.³⁹ When Glaucus maintains that Proetus "shrank from killing Bellerophon outright because he feared (or stood in awe of) such an action in his heart" (167), it is less a sign of Proetus' reverent and commendable treatment of a guest than of his failure to act like a warrior-king and kill his enemy outright.⁴⁰ This suspicion is verified some lines later when Andromache tells how Achilles killed Eëtion, but "did not strip him of his armor because, out of respect, he feared to do so in his heart" (6.417; cf. 6.167).⁴¹ Even though she is describing Achilles' behavior on the battlefield, the shared phrase (σεβάσσατο γὰρ τό γε θυμῷ) suggests a comparison with Proetus' behavior in a domestic dispute; in both cases an

notice of the fact that this is a chorus of *women*. Bergren 1983.69–85 discusses the association of women's speech, weaving as graphic communication, and *metis*. See also duBois 1988.136–37, who discusses the metaphorical connection between women and the writing tablet or *deltos*. Segal 1984.56 argues that Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and Euripides' *Hippolytus* and *Stheneboea* "associate writing, trickery, concealed love, female desire as all related distortions of the truth." On women who write in tragedy in general, see Cole 1981.224–25. Other possible evidence for the negative association of women with writing includes Philonides Comicus (frag. 7 Kock), *Trachiniae* 157 and 683, Euripides' *Iphigenia Among the Taurians* 735, Demosthenes 18.55, Plato *Laws* 854d. See also Lloyd 1983.76–78 and the passages cited there.

38 Cf. Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, in which the secret letter that Agamemnon writes to Clytemnestra, telling her not to bring Iphigenia to Aulis, might have prevented the Trojan War and the means of heroic *kleos*. On this play, see Zeitlin 1994.

39 As opposed to Proetus, Bellerophon excels in the face-to-face encounter; as an exemplary hero "he defeats two types of monstrous females (Khimera and Amazons) and resists a third, Anteia" (Martin 1989.128). The designated victim of a woman's trick, Bellerophon proves himself against her kind figured as monstrous.

40 At *Iliad* 13.356–57 Poseidon "shrank from defending the Argives outright but secretly, up and down the ranks, was forever urging them on in a man's likeness" (τῷ ῥα καὶ ἀμφοδίην μὲν ἀλεξέμεναι ἀλέεινε, λάθρῃ δ' αἰὲν ἔγειρε κατὰ στρατόν, ἀνδρὶ ἑοικώς). Hesitation to act outright (here against Zeus), expressed by ἀλέεινε plus the infinitive, is again accompanied by secret dealings, manifested in a god who impersonates a human being.

41 See Leaf 1960 on *Iliad* 6.418 on Achilles' decision to burn Eëtion's body along with his armor.

aristocratic warrior should not hesitate to kill his enemy.⁴² Thus, Proetus and his secret message represent the negative corollaries to man-to-man combat and face-to-face speech between elite Greek males.⁴³ It is worth noting too that the story of Bellerophon is told on the field of battle where Glaucus and Diomedes “avoid each other’s spears” (6.226) by speaking to one another. An analogy between direct combat and direct speech is neatly suggested here where the latter takes the place of the former.

In this episode, graphic communication is characterized by the geographical distance between the original writer or sender of the message and his addressee, by its deadly potential (although Bellerophon ultimately escapes death), and by its ability to hide what it says, both by virtue of the fact that it can be concealed and by the fact that there are those who cannot read. It is also associated with treachery as feminine and with putting male aristocratic and martial virtues in jeopardy. In the epic’s martial code in general, similar associations define the archer as opposed to the front-line fighter.⁴⁴ For example, at *Iliad* 11.369ff., after sustaining a surface wound from Paris’ bow, Diomedes calls Paris “an archer, wretch, a man of brilliant hair, and an ogler of girls” (τοξότα, λωβητήρ, κέρα ἀγλαέ, παρθενοπίπα, 385). He compares Paris’ assault to that of a woman or child (οὐκ ἀλέγω,

42 The Trojan War is a domestic dispute of a similar sort writ large since it is waged over the abduction of a guest-friend’s wife. Other relevant domestic disputes include Odysseus’ punishment of Penelope’s suitors (although they have not attempted to rape her), and Theseus having his own son killed for allegedly raping Phaedra.

43 See Hartog 1988.278 on the almost exclusive use of letter writing by the Persian kings in Herodotus’ *Histories*: “So the [royal] letter was a means of transmitting intelligence or instructions, a secret means of communication, and, all in all, a way of exercising power.” What Hartog does not note is that these kings must exercise their power over a vast empire, in implicit contrast to the smaller compass of the Greek *poleis* where face-to-face speech is the idealized mode of communication. The practice thus distinguishes Greeks from Persian barbarians in the related discourses of tyranny and empire. At *Histories* 5.49, Aristagoras, the Greek tyrant of Miletus, describes how the Persians differ from the Spartans as fighters. The Persians are “an unwarlike people” who “use bows and arrows and a short spear; they wear trousers in the field, and cover their heads with turbans. So easy are they to vanquish.” Letter writing, unwarlike behavior, a particular style of dress, tyranny, and empire are the defining characteristics of non-Greeks.

44 Cf. Herodotus 8.128 in which Artabazus is aided in his attempt to lay siege to Potidaea by the Scionaeon collaborator Timoxenus. The two communicate by sending written messages to one another concealed in arrows. Here archery is the vehicle of the written message in the service of treachery. Svenbro 1990 discusses this passage in connection with the question of ancient literacy. Deanna Shemek tells me of an analogue in Italian Renaissance culture in which the use of firearms is negatively compared to chivalric combat with swords and lances.

ὥς εἴ με γυνὴ βάλοι ἢ πάϊς ἄφρων, 389), disparages him for using “the dull weapon of an unwarlike and worthless man” (κωφὸν γὰρ βέλος ἀνδρὸς ἀνάγκιδος οὐτιδανοῖο, 390), and contrasts him with the warrior who fights “face-to-face with arms” (ἀντίβιον σὺν τεύχεσι, 386).⁴⁵ As an adjective in Homer, ἀντίβιος (βία) only occurs in the phrase ἀντιβίοις ἐπέεσσι (“with fighting or in-your-face words”), to describe the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon at *Iliad* 1.304, for example. Its usage testifies to a positive analogy between the front-line fighter and direct man-to-man oral communication on the one hand, and a corresponding negative analogy between the archer and mediated speech on the other, an analogy that more generally distinguishes the idealized Greek male who fights and speaks the truth man-to-man from the woman or feminized male who fights and speaks lies or half-truths from a distance. Recognition of these contested modes of speaking and fighting may help to specify an essential distinction between the *Iliad* as the poem of warfare and the *Odyssey* as the poem of war’s aftermath. In the former, man-to-man combat and man-to-man speech are mutually reinforcing practices required of the ideal heroic subject. In the latter, Odysseus’ return through and to the domestic space of the female is made possible by the mutually reinforcing practices of bodily disguise and duplicitous or scripted speech insofar as his words must conform to his disguised *persona*, i.e., by practices antithetical to those validated in the Iliadic narrative.⁴⁶

45 The phrase seems to refer to direct confrontation on the battlefield. Other examples of the comparatively low status of the archer include *Iliad* 13.713ff. where the Locrians are described and *Ajax* where Teucer (ὁ τοξότης) is attacked by Menelaus (1120ff.) and by Agamemnon (1226ff.). Agamemnon accuses Teucer of being a lowborn barbarian. See also *Iliad* 8.270f. where Teucer is said to run behind Ajax’s shield, like a child into its mother’s arms. On the other hand, the anti-archer prejudice is clearly not consistent in archaic culture: Apollo and Heracles are archers. But see Loraux 1990 on the relationship between Heracles’ hypermasculinity and femininity. The story of Odysseus’ bow at *Odyssey* 21.1–41 gives greater scope to the prejudice. Odysseus gives Iphitus a “sharp sword and strong spear” (ξίφος ὄξυ καὶ ἄλκιμος ἔγχος) in exchange for the bow, which Odysseus then never took to war but always kept in the house (ἐνὶ μεγάροισι) and used in his own country, presumably for hunting. Together with the somewhat pathetic fate of Iphitus, the narrative contrasts Odysseus—a man of the sword and spear—with the man of the bow. The subsequent contest of the bow, planned by Athena and Penelope in *Odyssey* 21, and Odysseus’ use of it to kill the suitors at the beginning of *Odyssey* 22, associates archery with female tactics, pseudo-combat (i.e., contests), and domestic rivalries rather than foreign warfare. The battle with the suitors begins with the bow, but is finally won with the sword in grisly hand-to-hand combat (see *Odyssey* 22.326).

46 A full discussion of this distinction between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is outside the scope of this paper.

Made more or less explicit in the Bellerophon episode, this negative analogy between mediated or scripted speech and the compromised status of the male hero is further illustrated in the *Iliad*'s message-sending scenes. In the famous Embassy in *Iliad* 9, Agamemnon sends Ajax, Odysseus, and Phoenix to convey his promises to Achilles and to entreat him to return to the fighting. Insofar as his promised gifts (9.122–57) are repeated *mutatis mutandis* by Odysseus (9.264–99), Odysseus *speaks for* Agamemnon and, in part, it is because Agamemnon's promises are made secondhand that they ultimately fail to persuade Achilles. This is in spite of the fact that it is the sage Nestor who recommends that men be appointed to carry the message (*Iliad* 9.165–66) and that the messengers are “men who are most dear” to Achilles (φίλτατοι ἄνδρες, *Iliad* 9.204).⁴⁷ Thus the failure of the Embassy, even though it implicitly conforms to protocols for conveying such a message,⁴⁸ only emphasizes the way in which secondhand or mediated speech stands in opposition to face-to-face speech as the validated and persuasive mode of communication among elite warriors.⁴⁹ Two statements by Achilles illustrate this opposition. In the first, he makes the following reply to Odysseus (9.308–15):

διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,
 χρὴ μὲν δὴ τὸν μῦθον ἀπηλεγέως ἀποειπεῖν,
 ἦ περ δὴ φρονέω τε καὶ ὥς τετελεσμένον ἔσται,
 ὥς μή μοι τρῦζετε παρήμενοι ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος.
 ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κεῖνος ὁμῶς Ἀΐδαο πύλῃσιν
 ὅς χ' ἕτερον μὲν κεύθῃ ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἴπῃ.
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ἐρέω ὥς μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι ἄριστα·

47 Heralds, of course, make just such “secondhand” speeches by definition. But as a formal class (ἄγγελοι) the problem with heralds too is that—contra Létoublon 1987—they may not get the message right or tell it truly. Messengers who are not officially heralds but who have a more personal relationship to the parties in question are also often implicated in some potential to deceive. Cf. Lichas' lying message in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, Oedipus' charges against Creon as the messenger from Apollo's oracle in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the message brought by the lone survivor of Laius' party that numerous men had attacked the king (*OT* 122–23), and the false message of Orestes' death in *Choephoroe*. See Longo 1978.72–86.

48 I am grateful to an anonymous referee for suggesting that I emphasize this point.

49 Cf. *Iliad* 1.324 where Agamemnon says that if the heralds are unable to bring back Briseis, he will go himself with many others to get her (ἐγὼ δὲ κεν αὐτὸς ἔλωμαι ἐλθὼν σὺν πλεόνεσσι). The statement implies both a need to use force (σὺν πλεόνεσσι) and that the success of intermediaries, i.e., the heralds, is in doubt.

οὐτ' ἔμεγ' Ἀτρεΐδην Ἀγαμέμνονα πεισέμεν οἶω
 οὐτ' ἄλλους Δαναούς ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἄρα τις χάρις ἦεν
 μάρνασθαι διήϊοσιν ἐπ' ἀνδράσι νωλεμέσ αἰεὶ.

Godly son of Laertes, resourceful Odysseus,
 it is necessary that I make a straightforward reply
 in the manner I have in mind (φρονέω) and what will be
 accomplished
 so that you may not sit and mutter at me one after another.
 For as I hate the gates of Hades, so I hate that man
 who hides one thing in his heart (φρεσίν), and says another.
 But I will speak as seems best to me;
 neither do I think Agamemnon the son of Atreus will persuade
 me,
 nor the rest of the Danaans, since there was no gratitude given
 for always fighting against hostile men.

Coming just after Odysseus has enumerated the gifts promised by Agamemnon, the statement may simply be “an excuse for the freedom with which Achilles means to speak,” as one scholar suggests.⁵⁰ But the reproach also pertains to Agamemnon, whose promises he has just heard from Odysseus, with the implied accusation that Agamemnon is the sort who “hides one thing in his heart and says another.” The distinction Achilles makes between what a man hides and what he says out loud is implicitly a distinction between true or complete speech (insofar as thought and speech are commensurate) and false or incomplete speech. Thus, when he professes to say what is on his mind (φρονέω) and what will be accomplished (ὥς τετελεσμένον ἔσται)—namely, that Agamemnon will not persuade him—the point is that *he* hides nothing and that what he says *is* persuasive.⁵¹ Achilles’ reference a few lines later to the time when Agamemnon “remained by the ships” while others fought for the spoils of war (9.332) again confirms the correspondence between martial and communicative systems: whereas Achilles is in principle “always fighting against hostile

50 Leaf 1960 ad loc.

51 Leaf 1960 ad loc. takes Δαναούς as the subject (and not the object) of πεισέμεν along with Ἀγαμέμνονα, and ἐμέ as the object in both clauses in lines 313–14. He admits, however, that the “phrase is ambiguous.” In either case, persuasiveness (or the failure to persuade) is more specifically Agamemnon’s problem than it is “the rest of the Danaans.”

men” and speaks directly from the heart, Agamemnon hides from the fighting and sends others to speak for him.

The second relevant passage occurs in Achilles’ final rejection of Agamemnon’s gifts (*Iliad* 9.369–76):

τῷ πάντ’ ἀγορευέμεν, ὥς ἐπιτέλλω,
 ἀμφοδόν, ὄφρα καὶ ἄλλοι ἐπισκύζονται Ἀχαιοί,
 εἴ τινά που Δαναῶν ἔτι ἔλπεται ἐξαπατήσιν,
 αἰὲν ἀναιδείην ἐπιειμένος, οὐδ’ ἂν ἔμοιγε
 τετλαίη κύνεός περ ἐὼν εἰς ὧπα ιδέσθαι·
 οὐδέ τί οἱ βουλὰς συμφράσσομαι, οὐδὲ μὲν ἔργον·
 ἐκ γὰρ δὴ μ’ ἀπάτησε καὶ ἤλιτεν· οὐδ’ ἂν ἔτ’ αὖτις
 ἐξαπάφοιτ’ ἐπέεσσιν.

Go back and tell him all that I command you,
 openly, so other Achaeans may turn against him in anger
 if he wishes still to trick some other Danaan,
 wrapped as he always is in shamelessness: yet he would not
 dare to look me in the face, even though he is bold as a dog.
 Nor will I join with him in any counsel, nor in any action.
 For he cheated me and offended me. May he not trick me
 again with words.

The repeated lexicon of trickery (ἀπάτησε, ἐξαπάφοιτο) and the emphasis on the deceptiveness of Agamemnon’s words (ἐπέεσσιν), register the connection between potentially false speech and the absence of the person whose speech is in question—a connection made vivid by the accusation that Agamemnon “would not dare to look [Achilles] in the face” (οὐδ’ . . . τετλαίη . . . εἰς ὧπα ιδέσθαι).⁵² Since the Embassy to Achilles, together with Zeus’ message to Agamemnon in Book 2 (to be discussed below), is one of the most extended and marked examples of message sending in the *Iliad*, it focuses attention on message sending as antithetical to the persuasiveness and truthfulness assured, at least in principle, by the presence of the speaking subject speaking for himself.⁵³ It is worth noting

52 The punctuation is that of the Oxford edition of Monro and Allen. Leaf 1960 puts a full stop after ἐπιειμένος. Cf. *Iliad* 15.147 and *Odyssey* 23.107 where the same phrase occurs.

53 A comparison can be made with the relationship between autopsy and truth-value in historical narrative, i.e., in Herodotus.

that when Achilles *does* accept Agamemnon's gifts in Book 19, Agamemnon offers them in person and refers to himself with an emphatic "I" that signifies his physical presence (ἐγὼν ὅδε, *Iliad* 19.140).

Another message-sending scene occurs at the beginning of Book 2 of the *Iliad*. In an effort to satisfy Thetis' request to give honor to Achilles, Zeus sends a dream (οὔλον Ὀνειρον, 2.6) to Agamemnon with the message that he is to prepare for battle since the time has now come for him to take Troy.⁵⁴ But we are told that the opposite is in store for Agamemnon and that the ensuing battle will bring disaster; the Dream leaves him "pondering things in his heart that are not to be accomplished" (τὰ φρονέοντ' ἀνὰ θυμὸν ἃ ῥ' οὐ τελέεσθαι ἔμελλον, 2.36).⁵⁵ The Dream is sent in the likeness of Nestor (Νηληϊφῶνι εἰοικώς, 2.20), and Agamemnon's faith in its veracity is implicitly related to this guise since Nestor is so often praised as the giver of sound advice in the epic.⁵⁶ Along with Proetus' graphic message discussed above, this Dream represents the only other example in the *Iliad* of a message based on an overt lie.⁵⁷ Its status *as* a message is marked by the number of times it is repeated or passed on in the text: first from Zeus to the Dream, then from the Dream to Agamemnon, then from Agamemnon to the Greek princes, and finally, in revised form, from Agamemnon to the Greek fighting men.⁵⁸ In his commentary on the *Iliad*, Kirk says that these repetitions are "really too much," but it is precisely this "too-much-ness" that focuses attention on the message *qua*

54 There are no explicit messages relayed to Achilles by the heralds sent to bring Briseis to Agamemnon (cf. 1.32ff.) or to Chryses by the men sent to return Chryseis to him (1.441ff.). Nor is Thetis' request to Zeus explicitly a message from Achilles (cf. 1.493ff.). But see Létoublon 1987.138–42 on the chiasmic relationship between the communicative scheme of Book 1 (Achilles to Thetis to Zeus) and Book 24 (Zeus to Thetis to Achilles). It might be remarked that Zeus' lie is told at the behest of Thetis, i.e., that a female is working behind the scenes (as in the case of Bellerophon). But Thetis does not give Zeus the idea of the "destructive Dream" (cf. *Iliad* 1.493ff.).

55 Later Nestor will maintain that, had the Dream's message been reported by any man other than Agamemnon, it would have been taken as a lie (ψεῦδος, *Iliad* 2.81). The irony lies both in the fact that the message itself is not true and (in retrospect) that Agamemnon will later convey a lie to his men outright (see below).

56 See Kirk 1990 ad loc.: "One would suppose that Agamemnon might dream either of Nestor advising him *or* of a truly divine messenger doing so; Nestor himself in the role of the latter might seem to break the Dream's verisimilitude." Cf. *Iliad* 10.496.

57 See Létoublon 1987.143, n. 16.

58 See Kirk 1985 ad loc. on the authenticity of these repetitive passages. The words of introduction (23–26) and salutation (33–34) which the Dream adds to Zeus' message are not strictly speaking deviations from the text of the message.

message.⁵⁹ These repetitions have the effect of crying wolf; they emphasize the falsehood of the message by insisting too persistently on its truthfulness, insofar as Agamemnon believes it to be true. The scene also illustrates the validation of an ontological and epistemological integrity of body and voice in the discourse of direct oral communication: the true Nestor would presumably tell the truth, but the false Nestor tells a lie.

Agamemnon reports the exact message from Zeus to the princes of the army, but a different message to the fighting men—a lie of his own (*Iliad*. 2.110–15):

ὦ φίλοι ἥρωες Δαναοί, θεράποντες Ἄρης,
 Ζεύς με μέγα Κρονίδης ἄτη ἐνέδησε βαρεῖη,
 σχέτλιος, ὃς πρὶν μὲν μοι ὑπέσχετο καὶ κατένευσεν
 Ἴλιον ἐκπέρσαντ' εὐτείχεον ἀπονέεσθαι,
 νῦν δὲ κακὴν ἀπάτην βουλευόσατο, καὶ με κελεύει
 δυσκλέα Ἄργος ἰκέσθαι, ἐπεὶ πολὺν ὄλεσα λαόν.

Danaan heroes, friends, servants of Ares, Great Zeus the
 son of Kronos has ensnared me in a heavy delusion (ἄτη).
 He is merciless. For he promised me before, and he nodded his
 head,
 that I would sack strong-walled Troy and then return home.
 But now he has planned an evil deceit (κακὴν ἀπάτην), and he
 orders
 me to return to famous (or unfortunate) Argos, when I have lost
 many people.

Once again the language of delusion (ἄτη) and trickery (ἀπάτη), combined with the irony that Agamemnon's lie is close to the truth behind Zeus' false message, is a reminder that Zeus *has* planned an evil deceit for Agamemnon, although not the one he invents. Agamemnon's lie is similar to Zeus', but with opposite intent. The god sends a message of victory only in order to defeat the Greeks and give honor to Achilles (ὅ γε μερμήριζε

59 Leaf 1960 on *Iliad* 2.60–70. Leaf approved Zenodotus' two-verse condensation of the passage. Cf. Kirk 1985 ad loc. Létoublon 1987.132 seems to agree with Leaf and argues that it is "as if the fidelity of the messenger in the archaic epic was never in doubt." But Létoublon makes no clear distinction between the content of the message and the accuracy of the message as delivered. Cf. Longo 1978.74–78, de Jong 1987.281, n. 71.

κατὰ φρένα ὥς Ἀχιλῆα τιμήσει, 2.3–4); Agamemnon sends a message of early homecoming—what amounts to a message of defeat—only in order to rouse the soldiers to stay and fight. In effect, the tactic (although not the intent) of the god is adopted by the general. The difference between Zeus’ message and Agamemnon’s is that the former eventually has its desired effect, i.e., “to destroy many beside the ships of the Achaeans.” Agamemnon’s lie, on the other hand, comes close to having an effect opposite to what he intends since the men *would* have returned home if Hera had not intervened (ἔνθα κεν Ἀργείοισιν ὑπέρμορα νόστος ἐτύχθη, εἰ μὴ Ἀθηναίην Ἥρην πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπεν, *Iliad* 2.155–56). The possibility of a “premature and fruitless return home” may be ascribed to mythical revision.⁶⁰ What that revision would mean, however, is the complete sabotaging of the poem’s martial ethos, an ethos that assumes a Greek victory. And because the content of Agamemnon’s message is not even predicated on a Trojan victory, but on withdrawal without a fight, it again undermines the epic’s ideology of direct or face-to-face combat. In this sense, Agamemnon is like Proetus whose message sending compromises his status as a warrior-king. Even though the *professed* intent of Agamemnon’s version of the message is to instill a fighting spirit in the men, it is left to others—Odysseus, in particular—to marshal the troops in person and to see to it that they do stay and fight.⁶¹

The two ways of *transmitting* mediated or relayed oral speech also contribute to the ideological distinction between it and direct oral speech. Messages are reported either in the first or third person. Within the context of each message, indirect or third-person reporting is a grammatical marker of indirect or mediated speech, while direct quotation or first-person reporting is a grammatical marker—even if a pretense—of direct speech.⁶² I suggested above that Agamemnon’s failure to convince Achilles to re-enter the war in Book 9 is due in part to his failure to face Achilles directly (or to look him in the face, εἰς ὤπα ιδέσθαι) and that the epic encodes its

60 Kirk 1985 ad loc.

61 Cf. the beginning of Book 9 (17–28) where Agamemnon repeats the call to return home, but this time in earnest. On the two passages see Kirk 1985 on *Iliad* 2.110–41.

62 Cf. Svenbro 1993, chapter 2, who argues that first-person writing on “egocentric” inscriptions or objects, conceived of as being read aloud, “gives the impression of being a direct speech-act” (29). Cf. the Platonic discussion of first-person imitation as opposed to third-person narration in the context of the critique of tragedy and comedy in the city, *Republic* 392d5ff. See also Benveniste 1971.199 on the non-personal third person.

valorization of direct face-to-face communication not only by representing messages as potential lies, but also by their potential failure to persuade their recipients. The fact that Agamemnon's promises are delivered by Odysseus in the third person seems to be another—if less overt—marker of his failure to face Achilles directly and, perhaps, of some uncertainty in the text about his intent to deliver on his promises.⁶³ But a better case for this hypothesis can be made for the two messages delivered by Agamemnon in Book 2, where their interdependence and proximity invite comparison and where the first, delivered to the princes, is in the first person while the second, delivered to the fighting men, is in the third. Agamemnon reports what he believes to be the true message from Zeus as it is delivered by the Dream to the Greek princes, including the phrase, “I am a messenger from Zeus.” But he uses the third person when giving his own false version of the message to his fighting men (2.110ff.).⁶⁴ Of course, the audience knows that

63 The message from Achilles that Odysseus reports back to Agamemnon is also in the third person, in much abbreviated form, and does not include the story of Achilles' double destiny. The question concerning this abbreviated report is naturally a question of what it includes and what it leaves out and the narrative provides an opportunity to judge its reliability on just this point. In making his response to Odysseus, Achilles offers two versions of what he intends to do: first he says he will leave Troy (9.355ff.) and then he says he will not fight until Hector reaches his own (Achilles') ships (*Iliad* 9.650ff., cf. 619). At 9.682 Odysseus reports the former, but fails to report the latter, even though Achilles had specifically told him to do so (*ἀλλ' ὑμεῖς ἔρχεσθε καὶ ἀγγελίην ἀπόφασθε*, *Iliad* 9.649; cf. 9.369–70). The message inherent in this omission is that messages are potentially insufficient or incomplete.

64 The choice of third- or first-person reporting also suggests a more complex hierarchical relationship between the sender of the message and the messenger. While first-person reporting, in which the messenger effectively speaks *as* the sender of the message, seems to indicate some affinity between them (either desired or actual), third-person reporting seems to suggest the messenger's subservient position with regard to the sender. So, for example, when the Dream reports Zeus' message to Agamemnon in the third person instead of speaking *as* Zeus, his status as the god's underling is emphasized (cf. Iris' use of the third person to report Zeus' message at 8.397ff.). Likewise, by reporting Agamemnon's message to Achilles in the third person, Odysseus' position as a sort of second-in-command is suggested. Conversely, when Agamemnon reports the Dream's message to the Greek leaders in the first person, the choice indicates his desire for, and misguided belief in, his privileged access to divine agency (cf. *Iliad* 2.35–40). Of course, this belief also lays stress on the irony of the situation since Zeus is clearly *not* Agamemnon's ally at this point in the narrative. See de Jong 1987, chapter 5, although class differences do not figure in her analysis. Similarly, Létoublon's explanation of changes in grammatical person in the reporting of a message (i.e., from third to second person) as “due to the positions of the interlocutors” is not sufficient, especially because it does not take into account the messenger who delivers his message in the first person: Létoublon 1987.124. Cf. Svenbro 1993.26–27.

both messages are false insofar as they are both meant to have effects opposite to what they purport. Still, because Agamemnon believes in the truth of Zeus' message, but knows his own is a lie, the difference in grammatical person reflects the difference in the truth-value Agamemnon assigns to each.⁶⁵

This difference also registers the class affiliations at work in the narrative. Again, Agamemnon uses direct or first-person speech to communicate what he believes to be a true message from Zeus to his fellow aristocrats (the Greek princes), but indirect or third-person speech to communicate what he knows to be a lie to the soldiers. This suggests two things. First, it attests to direct speech as the vehicle of truth between elites. Second, it assumes that falsehoods are most easily persuasive when perpetrated by a member of the elite class against those over whom he has power; a related argument can be made for Zeus' lying message to his mortal underling Agamemnon. So even though Agamemnon intends that his message will fail to persuade the men and that it will, in fact, make them want to stay and fight, that failure is ironically dependent on the possibility that they will believe it to be true, i.e., that they will believe he really wants them to return home. His lie also marks a point in the narrative where his own martial and political authority is at high risk; even if he does not know it, Zeus is planning his defeat. Agamemnon's ignorance, in fact, demonstrates his susceptibility to the dangerously persuasive potential of Zeus' false message of victory. His compromised position is also signified by the *content* of the lie he tells the men (to retreat before the Greeks have been victorious) and by the *fact* of his lying in order to test them. This understanding of Agamemnon's current position may account for what has been thought to be the anomalous presence of this test or *πεῖρα* in the narrative.

65 The problem is a bit more complicated if we consider the truth-value of the *content* of a message as distinct from the accuracy of the message *qua* message. We know that the content of Zeus' message is *false* insofar as he does not intend to give victory to the Greeks. But the message Agamemnon reports to the Greek leaders is *true* insofar as it is an accurate report of what Zeus and the Dream had said. In stressing what Agamemnon believes or knows to be a true or false message, I elide these two and, in the process, obscure the irony in the fact that his lie is closer to the truth of what Zeus intends. But the point about the choice of grammatical persons still holds. In general, that choice references the class-based relationship between the speaker and the recipient of a message and the truth-value of the message assigned by the speaker.

In conclusion, the *Iliad* valorizes an idealized mode of oral communication, what I have been calling face-to-face or man-to-man verbal exchange, by contrastively ascribing epistemological ambiguity to mediated or scripted speech (both graphic and oral). This validation is recognized in pejorative references to the absence of an original speaker who, in Achilles' words, does not dare to look him in the face, in an ambiguity about the truth-value of relayed messages, and in the shared class- and gender-specific protocols operating in the poem's martial and communicative systems. In this reading, the question of Greek orality is less about the formal properties of the epic than about the ideological formation of Greek masculinism and militarism. Both are tested or contested in the epic presentation of the relayed message, demonstrating how competing modes of human communication are battlegrounds for cultural identity and authority. Speaking more broadly, the analogies between martial and communicative practices in the *Iliad* can be recognized in Donna Haraway's conclusion that the struggle for dominance is the "chief form that organized other forms of social integration" in the natural and social sciences around the time of the Second World War.⁶⁶ Perhaps the struggle for dominance has *created* other forms of social integration and, among these, the competing discourses of orality and literacy in the West are created out of the struggle for dominant males to be—as Phoenix says to Achilles in Book 9 of the *Iliad*—"pre-eminent in battle and in speaking."⁶⁷

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⁶⁶ Haraway 1991.18.

⁶⁷ Cf. *Iliad* 9.440–41 where Phoenix says that Achilles was sent on the expedition to Troy while still a child and therefore not yet knowledgeable about warfare and debate: οὐ πω εἰδὼθ' ὁμοίου πολέμοιο οὐδ' ἀγορέων, ἵνα τ' ἄνδρες ἀριπρεπέες τελέθουσι.

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