STYLE AND CONSTRUCTION, SOUND AND RHYTHM: THETIS' SUPPLICATION TO ZEUS (*ILIAD* 1.493–516)

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The present study aims to explicate the style of a specific passage in Book 1 of the *Iliad* with the intention of offering a model for a close reading of Homeric poetry that is also suitable for the classroom. I should make it clear from the outset that I am not proposing new ways of reading epic but rather applying some of the rich harvest of recent scholarship to illuminate a specific passage, namely Thetis' supplication to Zeus in *Iliad* 1. The importance of this scene for *Iliad* 1 and, subsequently, for the poem as a whole makes it an ideal place to begin.

Although the *Iliad* moves on various levels and rotates between different poles,[1] one set of boundaries is Thetis' supplication to Zeus (forming the last part of the scene that begins with the meeting between herself and Achilles in Book 1), and Priam's supplication to Achilles in Book 24 (which brings the epic to a close). Thetis' supplication also functions as a nucleus, introducing themes that run through the entire epic. Its importance lies in its hybrid nature since it operates as a miniature model or paradigm, presenting for the first time themes which continue to evolve and create larger units. Some of these themes are Achilles' short life span, his liminality

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1 I am not inclined to see a single thematic thread upon which the *Iliad* is composed and developed: anger, lament, supplication are among the most important structural threads permeating the entire poem. Recent attempts to highlight one of these themes while underestimating the others are bound to be one-sided once we acknowledge the multifariousness of the epic as well as the presence of many aspects which create an exploding poetic and aesthetic polysemy.

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as a hero, the antithesis between honor and life, and the fulfillment of the *Dios boulê*.

Before I embark on a detailed stylistic analysis of *Iliad* 1.496–516, I would like to summarize the findings of some recent scholarship on Homer which are relevant to my study. These remarks are drawn from the wealth of secondary literature on Homer with a specific aim in mind: to show anyone teaching Homer that, in order to offer the most fruitful appreciation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, he or she has to combine different approaches and interpretive methods in order to reveal to the student the multifariousness of Homeric poetry. The following observations attempt to offer an outline of modern approaches to Homer and are representative of the three more fruitful schools in twentieth-century Homeric scholarship: neoanalysis (comparison of the way the *Iliad* presupposes but also deviates from the *Aethiopis*), speech-act theory (examination of supplication as a rhetorical sub-genre), and oral-formulaic theory (detailed analysis of specific structural devices of the Homeric text). By making students aware of these three interpretive approaches, the instructor can alert them to the following: 1) the role of myth in the shaping of Greek poetry in general, with emphasis on the conflicting versions offered by the tradition about the same story (neoanalysis); 2) the importance of distinguishing different sub-genres within a supra-genre such as epic (speech-act theory); and 3) the function of localization, meter, and verse-structure as semantic markers creating a "meaning" that extends and often interacts with context-specific semantic features.

The following points should be used by the instructor as examples of the ways he or she connects a more general introduction to modern approaches to Homer (as outlined above) with the Thetis passage that will be discussed in class.

1) "The plot of the *Iliad* traces a development between two successful supplications: Thetis' supplication to Zeus in Book 1, in which she bids Zeus to honor her son (τίμησόν μοι υἱόν), and Priam's supplication of Achilles, by means of which Zeus conclusively honors Achilles and guarantees that he will have glory, or kudos" (Crotty 1994.94). This is the way Crotty describes the importance of the supplication scene between Thetis and Zeus in Book 1; he traces a poetics of supplication in the evolution of a deliberate contrast between the fate of Thetis and that of her son. The beginning of the *Dios boulê* is inaugurated with a prayer which expresses the goddess' confidence "in her power to bring about her wishes (by offering an exchange of goods)" (Crotty 1994.96), but is capped (after the interval of 24 books) by an old man's *hikesía,* "which expresses the indifference of the world to the suppliant's wishes" (Crotty 1994.96).

Thus, the disparity between the immortality of the mother (Thetis) and the short life-span of the son (Achilles) becomes a central theme around which the poem evolves and with which it differentiates itself from the previous tradition; neo-analytical studies have convincingly shown that the *Iliad* is aware of the existence of an *Aethiopis* and that it is in the very treatment of the mother-son relationship that it (the *Iliad*) manifestly expresses its disavowal. Thetis, for all her similarities to her Aethiopic counterpart Eos, will not grant immortality to Achilles, as Eos did to Memnon in the *Aethiopis*, but will offer him the chance of getting his honor back, which, as she well knows, will definitely lead to his death. Consequently, "what Thetis asks Zeus to give Achilles is the opportunity to become the hero of the *Iliad*, to create the terms by which heroism will be redefined"[2]—as well as the terms by which the subject matter of the poem will be thematically verbalized, we might add.

2) Supplication forms one of the major rhetorical genres used by the heroic performer.[3] Martin (1989.45) argues that, although speeches in the *Iliad* are highly stylized, poetic versions of reality, they still retain their mimetic character as they tend to reflect the poet's knowledge of how his contemporaries express their feelings and ideas. Archaic coloring and traditional elements are not absent from the speeches, but, as recent studies have shown, most innovations occur within speeches.[4] In Martin's own words (1989.45), "Although we see Mycenaean memories in the narrative of Iliadic fighting, there is no comparable body of material for the poet to recall when reporting what Agamemnon, Odysseus, or Achilles says. Composition is less subject to tradition here. Speech is qualitatively different; unlike

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2 Slatkin 1991.40. For a detailed analysis of the connection between the *Iliad* and the *Aethiopis,* see Kakridis 1949 and Schadewaldt 1965[4]. For the contents of the *Aethiopis*, see Proclus' summary in Allen 1912.106; see also Severyns 1928.313–27.

3 Other such genres include prayer, lament, commanding, insulting, and narrating from memory. See Martin 1989.44, citing Basset 1938.70–71, who argues that these genres occupy 90 percent of the speeches in the *Iliad*. See also Bauman 1978.27, who maintains that speech-acts and speech-genres should not be distinguished in an oral culture.

4 Griffin 1986.39–57 observed that there are some features in the diction of the Homeric poems which are more common in the speeches: a higher frequency of abstract nouns, more freedom with explanation of events in terms of what we call personifications, the reservation of crucial moral terms from the narrative to the speeches, and higher percentages of negative epithets with α-privative. He argued, therefore, that the narrative portions of the poem antedate the speeches, since the features mentioned above speak for their lateness. Similar views have been maintained earlier on by Krarup 1948.1–17 and Fränkel 1962.68.

diegesis, it is the arena for pure mimesis." This mimetic character observed in Homeric speeches may also be connected to the basic distinction Martin makes between *muthos* and *epos* (1989.16): "A *muthos* focuses on what the speaker says and how he or she says it, but *epos* consistently applies to what the addressee hears." Thus, the relation between the two gods is reflected both in the kind of speech Thetis is using in her supplication to Zeus and in the kind of speech-act she believes she is performing. For, in *Il.* 1.419, she calls the speech that Achilles wants her to address to Zeus an *epos,* although it is a kind of command, albeit in the form of a supplication. This leveling out of the observable distinction between the two terms (*muthos* and *epos*) can be explained by the fact that *muthos* refers to authoritative (marked) speech whereas *epos* to not (necessarily) authoritative speech. Thetis' designation of Achilles' speech in *Il.* 1.419 as an *epos* is therefore indeterminate and does not necessarily mean that she views Achilles' speech as an unimportant utterance. At the same time, her use of the term *epos* shows that she considers her speech to be not authoritative and that she focuses "on message, as perceived by the addressee, rather than on performance as enacted by the speaker" (Martin 1989.12). These scrupulous observations may help us understand and appreciate more fully the internal rhetoric of Thetis' speech as well as its importance for the poetics of the *Iliad* as a whole.

3) In his study of the poetic significance of formal repetition in Homer, Kahane 1994 points to the use of certain semantic markers, such as localization, meter, and verse-structure, which determine the range of meanings for a specific word, thus contributing to what is today considered to be an essential epic property: polysemy. To the basic denotation of a word, Kahane adds reference specification by the immediate verbal context and also a context-free thematic reference provided by pattern-deixis. Therefore, anyone studying Homer has to be alert to the various functions of a word or expression when it is used in distinct dictional environments, or is localized in different parts of the verse, or when it has acquired a standard, context-free meaning. Semantic monopoly, to put it bluntly, is almost forbidden in the Homeric poems.

There is, however, a point which needs further clarification. Since a significant portion of this article is devoted to a detailed analysis of lines of verse and discusses matters such as the placement of formulas, sound patterns, and repetition, doubts may arise concerning the appropriateness of such an approach for an oral-derived poem. Is it possible that all these techniques reflect the metrical utility of the language as shaped by generations of poets and nothing more?

Since the 1960s, the number of studies providing reassessments of the oral-formulaic theory has increased.[5] Most of these studies modify our "Parryan" concept of a rigid formulaic system based on the assumption of orality. "The phenomena investigated . . . can, I suggest, be the product of an oral/traditional composition, but their existence does not preclude the possibility of literate composition. It is unlikely that they can be used as an argument either for or against orality and/or traditionality, except when making the very broadest points, and they neither contradict nor require us to modify our notions of Homeric formula or formulaic technique" (Kahane 1994.5). Kahane's view reflects my own opinion in respect to the dilemma of oral versus literate composition. Let me add that localization of metrical shapes is not incompatible with oral modes of verse-composition, but it is not typical of works orally composed since statistical data concerning the localization of *hapax legomena* for written hexameter poetry (such as that of Apollonius and Callimachus) closely parallel those of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (see O'Neil 1942 and Fantuzzi 1988). As far as structural formulas are concerned, one should bear in mind that "a literate poet imitating and/or innovating on the basis of an earlier Homeric, or oral, or traditional poem, or any two or all of these, would have certainly had time to choose positioning according to his own design. The literary poet could invent as many expressions as he chose" (Kahane 1994.10). Finally, repetitions can be of various sorts; they can include words, word-groups, metrical and syntactical patterns, or even whole verses. The reproduction of these patterns is, according to Lord (1960.32–33), the result of the tradition working within the mind of the singer; these repetitive melodic, metric, syntactic, and acoustic patterns form a grammar of poetry, "a grammar superimposed, as it were, on the grammar of the language concerned . . . The speaker of this language, once he has mastered it, does not move more mechanically within it than we do in ordinary speech" (Lord 1960.35–36). This is certainly true for the singer composing within the limits determined by the grammar of poetry; but repetition refers to pattern *usage* and pertains more to reception than to composition. To make this point clearer: my view is that both an ancient audience and a modern reader "are not directly subject to the exigencies of oral composition" (Kahane 1994.16) and so repetition is significant for them

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5 Major contributions by Hainsworth 1964, 1968; Hoekstra 1965; Edwards 1966.115–79. Recent scholarship in: Visser 1987 and 1988; Bakker 1988.151–95; Bakker and Fabricotti 1991. See also the surveys by Holoka 1973, 1979, 1990 (in three parts); by Edwards 1986, 1988 (in two parts); by Foley 1985, 1988.

since they do not operate at the level of the singer's compositional process
but on the level of the reception of his work.[6]

After giving to students a brief outline of the major modern ap-
proaches to Homer, the instructor should proceed as follows. He should
explain to the students that when reading Homer they will be dealing with
oral-derived (if not oral) poetry and that this fact is of great importance for
their understanding of Homeric poetry; Homer should not be treated like a
modern poet who composes verses in his room but as a singer who performs
in front of an audience. He should then explain that all the approaches
outlined above are complementary, as they help us to understand different
aspects of Homeric poetry. It must be made clear to the students that we
should not treat any chunk of Homeric text like a dissected member of a
dead body; classicists use different approaches in order to understand a
highly complex poetic creation and to appreciate its unity and coherence.
Finally, the instructor must divide the passage into smaller thematic units
and apply the methods I have described. These methods should all be
applied simultaneously to the text as they are the means for interpreting it
and not goals per se.

What follows is an example of the way the interpretive approaches
already discussed could be applied to Thetis' supplication in *Il*. 1.493–516
(corresponding to the third phase of the teaching process I have outlined
above). The scene of Thetis supplicating Zeus is divided into three discern-
ible phases of unequal length: 1. an introduction (493–99), 2. Thetis' first
appeal (503–10), and 3. Thetis' second appeal, introduced by three "inter-
mediate verses" (511–16).

1. INTRODUCTION (493–99)

After the meeting between Achilles and Thetis on the seashore,
Odysseus' delivery of Chryseis to her father followed by his propitiating
sacrifice to Apollo, and a brief comment by the external narrator on Achilles'

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6 The instructor should be also aware of Nagler's theory (1974) according to which literary
values can be extracted from repetition. Nagler argues (1974.11–12) that "phrases would
be considered not a closed 'system' classifiable as a subset of a larger system and
susceptible of sub-classification within its own boundaries, but an *open-ended 'family,'*"
where each part of the group is an *allomorph* derived from a mental but real entity (the
Gestalt) which expresses a preverbal template encompassing all the phrases of the same
family at an abstract level.

withdrawal from battle, the scene changes in order to describe the local and temporal circumstances under which the supplication will take place.

Verses 493 and 494 link the preceding narrative with the scene on Olympus. Their structural similarity is obvious. They are emphatically related by their initial phrases, ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δή and καὶ τότε δή, and are strongly formulaic in their components (Kirk 1985.105). The introductory words are followed by a prepositional phrase; the verses then diverge towards their ends, although they include the same components but in reverse order:

493: adjective + verbal group (verb + subject)

494: verbal group (verb + subject) + participial phrase

(expressing time, like the adjective of the preceding verse).[7]

The structural formularity of these two lines gives an awe-inspiring tone to the passage as their syntactic predictability with no abrupt change in the lining up of their components highlights the solemnity permeating the introduction of the supplication scene.[8] Thus, the picture of all the gods returning to Olympus with Zeus at their head has a venerable, majestic rhythm. This is also effected by the distribution of verses; the initial phrases are composed of four syllables containing the same metrical pattern (—∪∪—) in their first hemistich and both have a trochaic caesura. The structure of the second hemistich is very different as 493 is B2-//, 494 is B2-C2//, but the repetition of a familiar sound at the beginning of the lines would produce a text characterized by a linear rhythm that emphasizes the august grandeur of the gods' solemn movement.

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7 Verses 493 and 494 have the following shape: *ABC* (*A*: initial phrases formed by a conjunction [ἀλλ᾽-καί], a temporal particle [ὅτε-τότε], and the same particle [δή-δή]. In this way, a sort of homoioarcton is created with an emphasis in verse 494 because of the excessive number of "t" sounds [ὅτε-τότε]. *B*: prepositional phrase [ἐκ τοῖο-πρὸς Ὄλυμπον]. *C*: verbal group).

8 The structure of these verses is due to the combined effect of meter and Greek word order on the *diachronic level*; but on the *synchronic*, it is the formularity of these lines that dictates the rhythm of the flow of speech. I follow Bakker (1997.184), who argues that "meter emerges from discourse . . . but at some point it becomes so rigid as to constitute a structure in itself, regulating the flow of speech"; the structural formularity of these lines, which are uttered within a specific context (that of the preparation for the supplication scene), constitutes a speech ritual, with a function surpassing the grammatical and syntactical content of the construction: conjunction + temporal particle + resumptive δή + prepositional phrase + adjective + verbal group (see lines 493 and 494). Meter as well as word order are used as rhetorical devices manipulating the segmentation and arrangement of the constituent parts of speech in order to re-enact a specific ritual; thus *routinization* of ritual practice is re-enacted through *routinization* of speech. See Bakker 1997.186–87.

Recent studies concerning Homeric diction have drawn attention to the importance of the use of specific particles in the presentation of the story and, more significantly, in the participation of the audience in the unfolding of the plot. Bakker (1997.79) notes the importance of drawing the listener into the scene and creating a shared basis for the narrator and the audience "as if they were actually witnessing a given scene." Homeric diction uses particular particles or clusters of particles and temporal correlatives to achieve this goal: one of them is the "pair" ὅτε–τότε. Their use is more common at significant breaks in the story (of which the return of the gods from the Aethiopes in 1.493–94 is one), when the narrator most needs the participation of the listener. The poet attempts to create a common experience that unites narrator and audience as if they were present at the unfolding of a particular event or, to put it otherwise, as if they are both witnessing the same scene. Let us consider our present case (*Il.* 1.493–94):

> ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δή
> ῥ᾽ ἐκ τοῖο δυωδεκάτη γένετ᾽ ἠώς,
> καὶ τότε δὴ
> πρὸς Ὄλυμπον ἴσαν θεοὶ αἰὲν ἐόντες

> but *when*
> from that day came the twelfth dawn
> *(and) then*,
> the ever-living gods went to Olympus

The narrator aims to stress the here and now of the events he is referring to, but this is not just a device on the part of the "first narrator-focaliser," or NF1,[9] to give vividness to his account. This is the "textual indicator" of a common viewing (by both narrator and audience) of the picture of the return of the gods. The use of the apodotic καί in this sort of passage (*Il.* 16.780, 18.350, 22.208–09) is almost typical as it coordinates what Chafe 1994.63–64 calls "regulatory intonation units," which map out the flow of two "substantive intonation units" creating two balanced pairs (see Bakker 1997.79). The time interval is typically expressed by ἠώς

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9 For such terminology and a narratological examination of the presentation of the story in the *Iliad,* see de Jong 1987.

placed at the verse-end;[10] a similar connection with two other eleven-day intervals in Book 24[11] is facilitated because of "the formula system developed around expressions such as δυωδεκάτη γένετ᾽ Ἠώς| and |ἥδε δυωδεκάτη . . . and so on" (Kirk 1985.105).

I am not inclined to make too much out of the "symmetry" of the two intervals in Books 1 and 24; there is, indeed, something significant in this line, but it has nothing to do with Book 24. This is the very first turning-point in the Iliadic plot. It is the first time that the focus is transferred from the human to the divine level, from Troy to Olympus. Taplin, who argues for a performance of the *Iliad* in three days, thus making the internal structure of the poem (according to his own reading) match the actual performance-time, points to the importance of the role of specific characters or events which are placed at the performance-junctures.[12] I agree that it is significant

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10 Ἠώς occurs twenty-seven times in the *Iliad*, fifteen at the verse-end (as against forty times and thirty-five times in the *Odyssey* respectively). The pattern of twelve days occurs six times in the *Iliad* (1.493, 21.46, 21.81, 24.31, 24.413, 24.667). In Book 21 (21.46 and 21.81), the pattern is used for Lycaon who, after being sold by Achilles to King Euenos in Lemnos, stayed there for eleven days; the twelfth day he returned to Troas where he was killed by Achilles. In Book 24 (24.31 = 1.493), the pattern is employed by Apollo who asks the gods to do something for the body of Hector lying unburied for eleven days in Achilles' hut. Later on in the same book, it is used first by Hermes (24.413), who informs Priam that the corpse of his dead son, Hector, has been preserved by the gods who did not let it be mutilated by the birds, dogs, or worms despite being left unburied by Achilles for twelve days. Then the same pattern is used, albeit in an expanded and more elaborate form, by Priam (24.667) when he tells Achilles that the Trojans intend to lament Hector for nine days. They will bury him the tenth day, build a grave-mound over him, and, on the twelfth day, they will fight the Achaeans, if that must be (24.664–67). In the *Odyssey*, the twelve days pattern is attested twice. In Book 2.374, Telemachus asks Eurycleia not to tell Penelope that he is going to Pylos and Sparta until eleven or twelve days have passed. In Book 4.588, Menelaus invites Telemachus to stay in Sparta for eleven or twelve days. In these two instances in the *Odyssey*, as in the *Iliad*, the number twelve, when used to express a specific time-span, modifies the word ἠώς (dawn).

11 Achilles defiles Hector's body for eleven days (24.31) and Priam asks for an eleven-day truce so that he can give his son's corpse a proper burial (24.667). Taplin 1992.18, n. 16 maintains that 24.31 "must refer to the stretch of time since the death of Hector, and so the tenth not the twelfth day of divine quarrelling (107–108). So Kirk I. 493–4 is wrong to refer 24.31 and 413 to two different lapses of narrative-time." See also Willcock 1984.312, who notes that the number twelve includes the three days spent on the Funeral Games and the nine days that Achilles kept Hector's body in his hut unburied; therefore it is the tenth day since the beginning of the gods' disagreement about the fate of Hector's corpse and consequently there is no "symmetry" between Books 1 and 24 in this respect.

12 Taplin 1992.15–31 has argued that the *Iliad* may be divided into three parts of almost equal length. These parts are based on observation of turning-points in the plot of which 1.493 is the very first in the poem. Taplin's scheme runs as follows:

that Thetis intervenes in the Iliadic plot, often at the crucial turning-points of the poem. At the beginning of part I, she visits Achilles and then supplicates Zeus (1.493–94); at the end of part II, she again visits Achilles to ease his pain and grief for the loss of Patroclus and goes once more to Olympus to carry a new request; at the end of part III, "her summons to Olympos leads into the concluding resolution of Achilleus' anger" (Taplin 1992.21).

To sum this up (following Taplin's analysis), the mention of the return of the gods from the Aethiopes on the twelfth day creates a time-boundary after which the fulfillment of the *Dios boulê* is set in motion. The temporal localization of Thetis' supplication bespeaks the significance the poet bestows on this scene in performance-based terms, as it makes possible the aural perception by his audience of a key-scene for the plot, leading us to an appreciation of his artistry. The external audience is already (after Achilles' request to his mother to supplicate Zeus) aware of the fact that the main players will be Thetis and Zeus, but the way the two gods are juxtaposed in line 495 is worthy of special comment; for their juxtaposition within a verse brings about a half-verse cumulation leading from πάντες ἅμα το Ζεὺς δ᾽ ἦρχε. πάντες ἅμα is not at all otiose (cf. Kirk 1985.105), for it aims at creating an antithesis between the rest of the gods and Zeus.[13] It introduces a metrical sequence to show the number of the gods who went back to Olympus, in contrast with the short clause Ζεὺς δ᾽ ἦρχε. The heavy internal punctuation of the verse, as well as the position of the word "Zeus" after the comma, connote a distinction based on hierarchy: they all went to Olympus

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Part I: 1.1–9.713 with significant structural subdivisions at 1.492/3; 4.445/6; and 7.482/8.1.

Part II: 11.1 (Doloneia omitted)—18.353, with a subdivision at 16.123/4.

Part III: 18.354–24.804, with internal breaks at 23.56/7; 23.897/24.1.

Taplin proposes that the intervals between these parts varied according to the poet's sensitivity to audience response and maintains (26) that the three-part structure of the *Iliad* matches Homer's own performance.

13 Cf. 1.533 where Zeus' pre-eminent position among the Olympians is reflected by his being treated as a separate entity; there is no distinction between the rest of the gods as they are acting as *a group, all at the same time* (θεοὶ δ᾽ ἅμα πάντες). The appearance of all the "main players" (Thetis, Zeus, and the other gods) in a couple of lines (531–33) signifies the end of the supplication scene which is capped almost in the same way as it began (with the necessary changes, of course, as Thetis has to depart from Olympus). Line 498 confirms this interpretation as it is clearly stated that the son of Kronos was sitting apart from the other gods. There is an underlying tendency in this passage to emphasize Zeus' separation from the rest of the gods, a point which is vital for the latent parallelism with Achilles which I will explain in the next pages.

but Zeus (the only god mentioned *nominatim*) stands at their head. So, πάντες ἄμα is contrasted with Ζεὺς δ' ἦρχε, and the latter with the phrase Θέτις δ', which introduces the following scene on Olympus (cf. Kirk 1985.106). Consequently, heavy internal punctuation[14] contributes to the cumulative technique leading the thread of the narrative from the gods as a whole to Zeus—the pre-eminent divinity—and then to Thetis. This is an effective way of emphasizing Zeus' superiority to and distinction from the rest of the Olympians; his independence is important, as I will try to show, for the supplication that will ensue as well as for its latent connection with the gradual marginalization of Achilles amidst the Achaean army.

From this point onwards, the poet is interested in the preparation of Thetis' first appeal. This goal is achieved in various ways:

1. "Thetis rose through the swell of the sea" and went up to lofty Olympus. This ascending movement is indicated by two verbs (ἀνεδύσετο, ἀνέβη) and an adjective (expressing a high point) in the superlative. So Thetis' motion can be expressed graphically as follows:

A. ἀνεδύσετο: she rose

B. ἀνέβη: she ascended

C. ἀκροτάτη: on the highest (peak)

2. One should also note the associative syllabic repetition of "ane" in ἀνεδύσετο and ἀνέβη (both verbs are in the aorist).

3. The assonance (εὗρεν-εὐρύοπα)[15] of "eur" in line 498 isolates and therefore emphasizes the word Κρονίδην,[16] in contrast to the simple associative alliteration "kor-kro" in line 499. By using the word "isolates," I am trying to emphasize the textual emergence of Zeus after two lines totally

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14 I would like to stress here that despite the fact that punctuation did not exist when the Iliadic epic tradition was changing from a more fluid to a more static form, it is plausible to maintain that its Alexandrian interpretation, in terms of the punctuation signs we all know, must represent an older stage of sense-breaks which would be particularly felt when reciting poetry. See Nagy 1996.29–63 (especially p. 42) on an evolutionary model for the Homeric text.

15 Doubts may be raised against the εὗρεν-εὐρύοπα vocalic repetition mainly because of the rough breathing of the former vs. the smooth breathing of the latter. But it is not only a modern sensibility that ignores the change of breathing; this sort of assonance is common in Greek. See, e.g., Denniston 1952.124 where he cites numerous examples of this kind, like ἦμεν ἥμενοι (Eur. *IT* 1339), ἕως ἐῶσιν (Eur. *Or*. 238), ἐκ δ' ἑλοῦσα (Eur. *Alc*. 160). For the most detailed treatment of this phenomenon, see Norden 1915–1923³. See also Stanford 1967, Silk 1974.173ff., 224ff., and *OCD* s.v. *assonance*.

16 For the principal of "aural isolation," see Silk 1974.187–91.

devoted to Thetis. Thetis is still the grammatical subject of εὗρεν, and the verb, therefore, says something about her as well as about Zeus. In this verb, and in this line, Thetis and Zeus come together; their textual juxtaposition points to the emotional proximity that is achieved between suppliant and supplicated during a favorable entreaty. This is marked in the text by the εὗρεν of Thetis and the εὐρύοπα of Zeus. In particular, if εὐρύοπα is interpreted as "far-seeing" rather than "loud-speaking" it can refer to the moment Zeus *saw* Thetis, when she *found* him, and thus to a double connection between the two deities.

  4. The organization and structure of these four verses is symmetrically balanced. The first two are devoted to Thetis and the next two to Zeus. Both couplets end with a different grammatical form of the word for Olympus, emphasized at verse-end, for Mount Olympus is where the supplication will take place.

  5. The preparation for Thetis' supplication starts with a progressive enjambment created by the run-over words παιδὸς ἑοῦ. In this way, fresh material[17] (Achilles, who was absent from the introductory verses of this scene, is again connected with the narrative) is carried into the text. Verses 496 and 497 are formed of four phrases, 498 of three, and 499 of two.

  496: παιδὸς ἑοῦ /ἀλλ᾽ ἥ γ᾽ / ἀνεδύσετο / κῦμα θαλάσσης,
  497: ἠερίη δ᾽ / ἀνέβη / μέγαν οὐρανὸν / Οὔλυμπόν τε.
  498: εὗρεν δ᾽ / εὐρύοπα Κρονίδην / ἄτερ ἥμενον ἄλλων
  499: ἀκροτάτῃ κορυφῇ / πολυδειράδος Οὐλύμποιο·

  One may ask what is the connection between the acoustics of these verses and the lines of thought they emphasize. Semantically speaking, verses 496–99 are characterized by an intensive, augmentative element (since 496 and 497 have four cola whereas 498 and 499 have three and two cola respectively). It is this decrease in the number of cola that produces a change in the rhythm of these verses: a change reflecting on a rhythmical register the actual acceleration of Thetis' motion as she goes up to Mount Olympus. The fewer the cola the faster the rhythm, since the poet skips quickly through those verses with fewer internal breaks. The intensive, augmentative element of the first two verses can be better understood if we bear in mind that the repetition of compound verbs, the first part of which is formed by the preposition ἀνά (ἀνεδύσετο, ἀνέβη), conveys the notion of ascension, "up or on," and that the internal rhyme in verse 497 is striking to

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17 The point is made by Parry 1971.251–65.

the ear: the first three feet of this verse begin with the same sound ("e"), and the two following feet also begin with a different repeating vowel ("u"). Rhyme means the similarity of sound, and similarity of sound can point to the regularity of an action or to an uninterrupted procedure—like the dawn which always comes at the beginning of the day (ἠερίη).[18]

The accelerating rhythm of the above lines is also expressed through formulaic repetition. Let us consider the following expressions which have some interesting features in respect to their acoustics, structure, and metrical shape.

1. The formula μέγαν οὐρανὸν Οὔλυμπόν τε (after the caesura) brings to mind *Il.* 5.570 and 8.394. The formula μέγας οὐρανὸς Οὔλυμπός τε occupies the same part of the verse in all three lines, although in a different case (cf. Chantraine 1932.134). The poems themselves show an alternation in quantity between Ὄλυμπος and Οὔλυμπος, a sure sign that

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18 Verse 497 begins with the phrase ἠερίη δ'. The adjective ἠερίη is found three times at the beginning of the verse (*Il* 1.557, 3.7, and in *Od.* 9.52 in the form of ἠέριοι; cf. Chantraine 1932.134) and one should note the sound effect caused by the internal hiatus as two vowels are juxtaposed inside the same word. Stanford (1967.58) notes that "Internal hiatus, as in γοόωσα and Αἰαίη, was regarded as a delightful feature of Homer's speech, and the terminal or external kind, as in ἄλγε' ἔχοντα is not uncommon. Demetrios praised the euphonic effect of such successions of vowels citing Homeric forms like ἠέλιος and ὀρέων in which, as he tells us, the successive vowels have a special melody of their own: τά γε μὴν ποιητικά, οἷον τὸ ἠέλιος, διῃρημένον καὶ συγκρουόμενον ἐπίτηδες, εὐφωνότερόν ἐστι τοῦ ἥλιος καὶ τὸ ὀρέων τοῦ ὀρῶν. ἔχει γάρ τινα ἡ λύσις καὶ ἡ σύγκρουσις οἷον ᾠδὴν ἐπιγιγνομένην." See Grube 1961 §70. Eustathius of Thessalonica (Comm. ad v. 497) makes almost the same observation, but, at the same time, he adds a further point: Τὸ δὲ ἠερίη, ἐὰν ἀντὶ τοῦ ὀρθρινή, ὡς εἴρηται, λαμβάνηται, πλεονασμὸν ἔχει τοῦ ε and then ὅτι οὐ μόνον τὸν πρὸς ἑσπέραν καιρὸν οἶδεν ὁ ποιητὴς λιταῖς πρέποντα, ὡς ἐν τῇ ι' ῥαψῳδίᾳ εὕρηται καὶ ἐν τῇ Πριάμου ἱκετείᾳ καὶ ὅτε δὲ Ὀδυσσεὺς τὴν Ἀρήτην ἱκετεύει, ὁπηνίκα αἱ ψυχαὶ πρὸς ἔλεον ἀνίενται, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν ὄρθρον ἐπιτήδειον οἶδε τοῖς γουναζομένοις εἰς ἔντευξιν διὰ τὸ νηφάλιον τοῦ καιροῦ, "If 'early at morning' (ἠερίη), as it has been said, is taken instead of 'at daybreak' (ὀρθρινή), it has an excessive number of e-sounds . . . because the poet knows that not only is the time towards evening appropriate for prayers, as it has been shown in the ninth Book and in the supplication of Priam and when Odysseus supplicates Arete, when the souls are left free to ask for pity, but he knows that the morning is also suitable for those who fall down and clasp another's knees in order to express a petition because of the mildness of the time." The scholia repeat the very same idea: Διδάσκει δὲ καὶ τὸν τῶν ἐντεύξεων καιρόν· ἥσυχος γὰρ καὶ νηφάλιος ὁ ἑωθινὸς καιρός (see Erbse 1969–1978.1.137). So there is a general agreement between the scholiasts about the use of the word ἠερίη expressing the idea of an early departure to Olympus. The assonance of the sound "e" was also noted by the scholiasts and even in such a late period (late as far as the pronunciation of Greek is concerned) as that of Eustathius.

we are dealing with metrical lengthening, the more so since lengthening generally occurs in antispastic forms.[19]

2. A similar feature can be seen in verse 498. εὗρεν δ' εὐρύοπα Κρονίδην is also found in *Il*. 15.152 and 24.98, occupying the same part of the verse, and ἄτερ ἥμενον ἄλλων in *Il*. 5.753, which is a slightly altered form of *Il*. 1.498.

3. Finally, *Il*. 1.499 is the same as both *Il*. 5.754 and *Il*. 8.3. Ἀκροτάτῃ κορυφῇ is a formula (six times in the *Iliad*): it is attested twice in the genitive (13.12, 14.157), three times in the dative (1.499 = 5.754 = 8.3), and once in the accusative (14.228).

This formula in the dative is part of a verse-long formula. Its meaning is generic as it is used to refer to the seat of Zeus on the highest peak of Mount Olympus; in two of its attestations in the dative (1.499 and 5.754), it is preceded by almost identical verses stressing the fact that Zeus is sitting apart from the other gods. On the other hand, this is not the case with 8.3. The formula ἀκροτάτῃ κορυφῇ, which has the metrical shape of a hemiepes (—∪∪—∪∪—), shows a firm localization at the beginning of the line whenever it is used in the dative. The formula may well be very old[20] given the possible origin of the dactylic hexameter from the hemiepes (—∪∪—∪∪—) plus a paroemiac (X—∪∪—∪∪— —) (so West 1973. 179–92).

The dense formulaic elements of these lines create, through the repetition of familiar expressions, an intimate, attached mood: that of a habitual action which is known to the audience. At the same time, these repetitions produce emphasis as well as a more rapid pace. Repetition increases the force of an expression, but it also makes the listener and the modern reader alike *read* it more quickly because it is familiar to them. The effect of the formulaic expressions which crowd verses 497, 498, and 499 is the intensification of the rhythm, which, in turn, mirrors the speed of Thetis' ascent to the peak of Mount Olympus.[21]

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19 See Schulze 1892.271–73 and Wyatt 1969.90 (14.6.2).
20 The repetition of the consonantal cluster "kr" in the words ἀκροτάτῃ κορυφῇ may have generated this formula.
21 For a similar effect in another Iliadic passage, see Pucci 1997.97–112.

2. THETIS' FIRST APPEAL (503–10)

So, at the end of verse 499, everything is ready for Thetis' supplication: place (Οὔλυμπος), time (ἠερίη), suppliant (Θέτις), and god (Ζεύς). Now is the time for the supplication to begin. Supplication is a *performance*, a mimetic representation in words of an actual speech-act;[22] as such it has to refer to both the corporeal and mental aspects of a real act of begging. Verses 500–02 are devoted to the corporeal appeal of the deity.

2.1 The Corporeal Aspect (500–02)

"Thetis crouched in front of Zeus, took his knees with her left hand and reached with her right hand to hold him under the chin. Then she spoke in entreaty to lord Zeus, son of Kronos." These few lines describe the standard gestures of supplication in a rather graphic way. Two features draw our attention.

1. The verb καθέζετο creates an emphatic contrast with the preceding sequence of verbs denoting ascension (ἀνεδύσετο, ἀνέβη) as well as with the adjective-noun construction ἀκροτάτη κορυφῇ. This opposition designates a shift in the rhythm of the passage: in the beginning, the tone is unhurried and solemn, then (starting with 495[b] after the penthememiral caesura) a speedier pace is adopted as Thetis emerges from the swell of the sea and goes up to Olympus; but, in lines 500–02, starting with καθέζετο, the tempo slows down just before the beginning of the entreaty.

2. The progressive enjambment introduced by σκαιῇ (verse 501), followed by heavy internal punctuation, links 500 to 501 in an effective way. For the run-over word (σκαιῇ) juxtaposed to δεξιτερῇ creates a chiasmus:

> λάβε γούνων / σκαιῇ
> δεξιτερῇ / ὑπ᾽ ἀνθερεῶνος ἑλοῦσα

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22 Cf. Martin 1989.43–47. Martin (45–46) asks the question how different is Iliadic mimesis from real speeches. By drawing on studies in ethnography, he points to a possible performance distinction: "Yet a performance distinction might well have existed: certainly rhapsodic performance, as we see from Plato's *Ion*, indicates that the heroes' speeches were acted out in voice and character, like dramatic roles. Comparative evidence from the Kirghiz epics is also in favor of such a distinction: Radlov reported in the nineteenth century that the Central Asian bards shift to a slow-paced, aria-like performance when they come to the spoken parts in their compositions."

The harsh-sounding σκαιῇ-δεξιτερῇ cluster (reinforced by the enjambment) contrasts with the euphony of the ἀνθερεῶνος-λισσομένη sequence. This contrast, which is reinforced by the hiatus, alludes to the antithesis between Thetis' intense feelings and Zeus' majestic tranquility; the more so, since the words pertaining to Zeus (ἀνθερεῶνος and λισσομένη, the latter having Zeus as its notional object) are clearly euphonic whereas those referring to Thetis (σκαιῇ-δεξιτερῇ), with their strident sequence of consonants making even their pronunciation strenuous, express her emotional strain.

2.2 The Mental Aspect (503–10)

1. In ἢ ἔπει ἢ ἔργῳ, the simple associative alliteration has a double effect. Positively, it leads the listener (through the repetition of the "e" sound, seven times in the first half line) straight forward on and across the central caesura to the second half of the fourth foot word break (κρήηνον). Negatively, the alliteration may tend to reduce the rhetoric of this heavily chiastic sentence by stressing a phonetic similarity between ἔπει and ἔργῳ. Crotty (1994.94–95) points to a typology of supplication comprising a standard procedure: "The person who is praying reminds the deity *of past services performed or of earlier displays by the god of benevolence to the one seeking his favor now*. A future service may be promised, usually a sacrifice. The prayer concludes with the actual request, expressed concisely and directly" (my emphasis). Crotty adds that "the suppliant does not appeal to the god's pity but seeks to offer a kind of exchange: a favor now in light of past works pleasing to the gods or a promise of such a work in the future. The typical prayer, in other words, is similar to the kind of supplication used by warriors on the battlefield, in which the suppliant lays stress on his ability to repay his captor rather than on appeals to the other's shame or pity. The form of Greek prayer does not bespeak the suppliant's weakness; rather, it casts the one praying in a position of strength, as one with the wherewithal to negotiate with the gods. It reflects a stance in which the suppliant has some claim to the god's benevolence because of past or future favors" (1994.95). Therefore, Iliadic supplication, in this case Thetis' appeal, reflects the very nature of the warrior society, which is based on exchange rather than pity. In this way, Thetis' request mimes the poetics of the *Iliad* as a whole and becomes the starting point from which the rest of the epic evolves: in fact, the *Iliad*, if seen as a continuous series of supplications and requests which are granted or rejected, uses this scene as the generating cause of all the other acts of begging.

2. τόδε μοι κρήηνον ἐέλδωρ.[23] It is interesting to note that although Thetis is praying, she uses two imperative verb forms in succession (κρήηνον, τίμησον)—the latter emphatically stressed at the beginning of line 505.[24] However, both these imperatives are accompanied by datives of the first person of the personal pronoun. The use of the datives serves to focus the listener's attention on Thetis. They turn the course of the λιτή from Zeus' august grandeur to the appeal of a less powerful deity.[25] They also create an important indirect reference to the Thetis-Zeus relationship through the semantic pair πάτερ-υἱόν. Thetis is asking for a favor in return for a favor she had granted to Zeus.

3. The introduction of the relative clause ὃς ὠκυμορώτατος ἄλλων ἔπλετ' reveals Thetis' effort to make her appeal stronger by using rather oblique means: the fact that her son is destined to die young. As far as it concerns Thetis (μοι), death is connected to pity. This relative clause is not only complementary to τίμησόν μοι υἱόν, but also interrelated to the very paradox enclosed in the tragedy of Thetis' request: the boundlessness of Achilles' grief (already highlighted by the poet during the meeting with his mother at the seashore) is counterbalanced by the shortness of his life. Honor and life become "the theoretical pair" of his oscillation; conscious of his death, Achilles chooses honor instead of a long-lasting life, but remains silent on the dire consequences of his choice. Many Achaeans will lose their lives so that honor can be restored to him. If there is any ontological basis for his requests, it is a rather selfish one or, at least, self-referential.

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23 This formula is attested (with a slight variation) five times in the *Iliad*, always within a prayer; in 1.41 and 1.455, from Chryses to Apollo, in 1.504, from Thetis to Zeus, in 8.242, from Agamemnon to Zeus, and, in 16.238, from Achilles to Zeus. It is a typical expression used by the suppliant after the completion of his initial address to the deity, when he desires to express his appeal. The above formula functions as an introduction to the verbalization of the petition, as if the suppliant is saying, "and now follows my request."

24 The antithesis between the tone of the supplication of Chryses to the Atreides in *Il*. 1.17–21 and that of Thetis is noteworthy. The optatives used by Chryses have been changed to imperatives. The effect in color and emotional pitch is more strongly felt in Thetis' second appeal where a series of three consecutive imperatives is employed. Thetis' supplication does not refer to the magnanimity of Zeus, but Chryses' to Apollo does.

25 The use of μοι expresses a certain emotional intensity. It means that Zeus should honor Achilles for Thetis' sake; the lack of a possessive pronoun or the adjective φίλος, which is regularly used in Homer as a possessive, makes the dative μοι connote not only the person for whom the supplication is carried out but also *its connection to the textual suppliant* and, through him, the fact that here we are dealing with a sort of *embedded supplication* where the textual suppliant (Thetis) reflects and acts in the place of the implied one (Achilles). This important dimension of Thetis' supplication as well as its interpretative implications will be clarified below.

In verses 506 and 507, one notices two internal enjambments stopped by semicolons. However, the first integral enjambment in itself (ἔπλετ᾽), as well as the alliteration of the sound "e," are rather trivial; enjambment is not necessarily of significant words or significant itself, nor is alliteration. On the other hand, it is striking how ἠτίμησεν appears in the very beginning of the verse. The integral enjambment doesn't allow any "extended" pause, but leads straight from one verse into the next. However, there is a minimal interruption, thus leaving Ἀγαμέμνων hanging at the end of verse 506 and emphasizing ἠτίμησεν at the beginning of the line. This minimal interruption is due to the completion of the formulaic expression ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων and the normative effect of the verse-end at the completion of the hexameter pattern itself (cf. Kirk 1985.22–23). That is to say, as the hexameter line is completed, there is a minimal time-lapse required before the beginning of the next line; this temporal neutralization can be seen in one of the most elementary but often neglected metrical rules governing the hexameter: I am referring to the neutralization in pre-pausal position of the basic quantitative prosodic difference between long and short in favor of the former, what is widely known as *brevis in longo*. This neutralization can not occur unless there is a slight time-lapse that shows that a verse is completed and a new one is bound to begin. In other words, the graphic representation of the hexameter *by a single printed line* is not simply a matter of aesthetics; it not only denotes the completion of the meter, but also connotes the aural, though not morphologically and grammatically visible, lengthening of the last syllable. Therefore, the formula ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων, positioned at the verse-end, would be followed by a slight time-interval which would allow the audience to hear ἠτίμησεν at the beginning of the ensuing verse as a loudly ringing bell that could not remain unnoticed.

Verse 507 is striking. It repeats 1.356, Achilles' own words to his mother. This repetition emphasizes what Agamemnon has done to Achilles and points to the terms under which the entreaty will be carried out. One should notice the terminal assonance in the sound "ras" (γέρας, end of the fourth foot, and ἀπούρας, end of the verse), an assonance assisted by the words' accentual pattern.[26] Γέρας is the object of ἑλών, ἔχει, and ἀπούρας

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26 Of course, one could argue that the quantity of the final syllable ("ras") in γέρας and
   ἀπούρας is different (short in the first case and long by compensatory lengthening in the

to which it is also related through assonance. Thus three verbal forms (two aorist participles, emphatically placed at the beginning and the end of the clause, and one verb [ἔχει]) are connected with γέρας. Why is everything after ἠτίμησεν pointing to γέρας? The answer is that the poet wants to emphasize that heroic τιμή is based on γέρας (> γεραίρω = honor or reward with a gift: LSJ s.v.). The same idea, dishonor, is expressed in two different ways (within a single verse): the prerequisite of honor (in a negative way) and the verbal expression of dishonor are juxtaposed.

The concept of τιμή reappears (this time through another imperative, τεῖσον) in the next verse. Τιμή is certainly the most prominent word and its emphatic role is underlined by the alliteration of "t" in line 510 which links τιμῆ with τείσωσιν. Consequently, ἠτίμησεν and τιμῆ are placed at important verse stops bracketing the kernel of Thetis' appeal.

So Thetis' first appeal is based on the importance of heroic honor (τιμή); the use of a theme, the offended honor of Achilles, constitutes the keystone around which the Iliadic plot develops. Therefore, it is crucial to linger over this point in order to understand the semantics of Thetis' supplication and its consequences for the rest of the poem.

Thetis asks Zeus, the divine *anax*, to grant Achilles what Agamemnon, the human ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν, has deprived him of. The placement of ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων and Ὀλύμπιε μητίετα Ζεῦ in the second part of their hexameter lines, after the trochaic caesura, enhances the multiple parallelisms: through localization, the effect of their taking and restoring Achilles' *timê* is highlighted, and the divine-human distinction accentuates the relationship between Achilles and Thetis. To put it bluntly: Thetis asks Zeus to "correct" the injustice done to her son as she appeals to her divine superior/counterpart in order to restore the lost *timê* of Achilles.

As noted, Thetis uses the typical gestures of supplication, but she actually employs the *da quod dedi* tactics of reciprocity. She restored Zeus' power and now she begs him to restore her son's lost *timê by menacing Agamemnon's kingship.* This is the deliberate paradox of her supplication: her request is based on reciprocity *only if seen from Achilles' point of view; from Agamemnon's point of view, it is a threat to his superiority and preeminence among the Achaeans.* Therefore, one can see how Thetis absorbs

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second: *ἀπούροντ-ς 〉 ἀπούρας). This is certainly true, but assonance does not necessarily depend on vowel quantity but rather on sound repetition. Thus, the difference between "ras" (γέρας) and "raas" (ἀπούρας) does not forestall the effect of the assonance.

and verbalizes a request *in Achillean terms,* whereas Zeus can easily think (and that is what we are supposed to believe) *with an Agamemnonean interest in mind* (for if he resembles anyone, it is by all means Agamemnon). Whence his initial silence (512: ἀλλ' ἀκέων δὴν ἧστο).[27] From the point made above, it is clear that Thetis' supplication can also be read as a figurative delimitation of Agamemnon's power. This twofold *enjeu* becomes particularly intriguing if we recall that Agamemnon has spoken almost like Zeus "and declared his disgust for someone who has tried to speak as equal."[28] So Thetis and, through her, the poet of the *Iliad* "play" with the notion of *timê* in connection with *kratos* (power, authority). Agamemnon, with his Zeus-like behavior, has dishonored Achilles; now Zeus will figuratively dishonor Agamemnon by depriving him, and consequently the Achaeans, of their *kratos* (Agamemnon's source of authority and *timê*) and granting it to the Trojans.

The pair Agamemnon–Achilles is a "reverse" of the other famous Iliadic *zeugos* on the Achaean side, namely Agamemnon–Menelaus. Menelaus "fonde et incarne la légitimité" (Rousseau 1992.9.19) of the power exercised by Agamemnon, but Achilles, on the contrary, is the one who challenges this *Agamemnonean legitimacy by supporting his own, Achillean, legitimate request*; consequently, his mother's supplication is an entreaty for divine confirmation of what otherwise would have been empty rhetoric.[29]

It has been argued that there is a link between the *Theogony,* where the central theme, according to a metonymic reading of its mythical narrative, is Zeus' *mênis,* and the *Iliad,* which begins and is centered around the *mênis* of Achilles. Muellner maintains that the *Theogony* functions as a

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27 According to Montiglio 1993.184, Zeus' silence belongs to those Iliadic silences situated in the midst of a "réseau verbal" which underlines and emphasizes their temporary nature. Montiglio notes that quite often silence in the *Iliad* denotes a suspension of speech and is perceived as a lack which will be filled by the intensity of another speech that will follow.

28 Pucci 1997.194. For the suggested parallelism between Zeus and Agamemnon, see Pucci 1997.201 and *Il*. 1.352–56.

29 See Pucci 1997.201–02, who argues that "the striking accusation Achilles levels at Zeus (352–56) is that the god has failed and betrayed Achilles. He seems to believe that Agamemnon was literally correct when he had boasted that his own men and Zeus would continue to honor him even if Achilles should desert (173–75). Achilles now evokes *these two complicitous beings*, the king of men and the king of gods, responsible for disgracing him, and qualifies with them their long epithets, as if to underline their misused power." Pucci goes on to argue that the responsibility of Zeus is a manipulation by the text either to show the immensity of Achilles' wounded pride or to persuade the extratextual audience of the legitimacy of Achilles' request.

prooimion to the *Iliad,* and so it is conceivable that the very first word of the latter expresses the thematic nucleus of the former (1996.94–96). The same author goes so far as to suggest that a variant of the myth of Thetis and Peleus that forms the starting point of Greek epic alludes to an archetypal competition between Achilles and Zeus which can be traced in a perform-ance sequence between the two poems, a sequence that can summarize the process of epic poetry's *raison d' être*, its ontogeny. The *Iliad* transforms divine to heroic *mênis,* as the *mênis* of Apollo[30] causes, albeit indirectly, the *mênis* of Achilles; as far as Zeus' *mênis* is concerned, its Iliadic function is rather secondary, as it is used to support Achilles' wrath[31] at the end of Book 1.

Keeping this approach in mind, we can see that Thetis' appeal to Zeus has another, figurative dimension. It reveals the existence of a latent other side of things; for Achilles' proximity to the divine results in a pathetic paradox: the immortal mother (Thetis) appeals to the supreme deity (Zeus) begging him to grant her mortal son *timê* (honor), the one thing that will lead to his death (see Pucci 1997.194). She practically asks Zeus to initiate a course of events leading to Achilles' death, but, at the same time, she asks him to make Achilles the hero of the *Iliad*, to allow the poem to create its own subject-matter.

The archetypal competition between Achilles and Zeus has, I think, a cosmogonic background, not only a potential poetic one, as explained above. Pindar (*Isthmian* 8.31–66) relates a tradition according to which Thetis was destined to give birth to a child stronger than his father (πεπρωμένον ἦν φέρτερον πατέρος ἄνακτα γόνον τεκεῖν), if she had been united with Zeus (Δί τε μισγομέναν) or with one of his brothers (Διὸς παρ᾽ ἀδελφεοῖσιν) instead of a mortal. Vernant and Detienne (1978.127–64) convincingly argue for an inherent link between *Mêtis* (present in the *Theogony*, absent in the *Iliad*) and Thetis, herself a figure of *mêtis,* and Nagy (1979.344–47) stresses the cosmic powers of Thetis and her link to the

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30 The *Iliad* achieves a remarkable displacement: it replaces Achilles' (and for that matter, Patroclus') divine antagonist, Zeus, by Apollo.

31 Book 1 presents a full circle of the *mênis* theme: the *mênis* of Apollo is appeased by Odysseus (when he takes Chryseis back to her father); then Agamemnon's *mênis* is caused because he has no female slave; he takes Briseis from Achilles, thus causing the latter's *mênis*; Thetis (as we pass to the divine world) persuades Zeus to validate Achilles' *mênis,* provoking Hera's fear, and, so to suppress her protest, Zeus threatens Hera with his *mênis*; this threat is averted by Hephaistus' cautionary narrative about Zeus' *mênis* against him.

πόντος (the vast, unexplored sea where darkness prevails). We also know that Briareos, once summoned by Thetis, saved Zeus from an internal Olympian threat (*Il.* 1.398–406); he has also, together with two other Hundred-Handers (*Th.* 147–53), ensured the *kratos* of Zeus (*Th.* 662) by defeating the Titans. Briareos, who is also known as Aigaion (*Il.* 1.403–04, *Titanomachy* fr. 2, p. 110 Allen) lives in the sea and has *Pontos* as his father. So the link with Thetis is obvious.

If we use all this information about the connection between Thetis, Briareos, Zeus, and Achilles, we can plausibly argue that the *Iliad* makes Zeus do for Achilles on the human level what he did not do for him on the divine. Achilles will not become the best of gods, a deity more powerful than Zeus himself because of the *unwillingness* of Zeus *in the non-Iliadic epic tradition* (Nagy 1979.347); but he will become the best of heroes by the *will* of Zeus *within the Iliad*. His potential father will restore his lost *timê*, thus doing in the span of a lifetime what he could have done in the span of eternity. And yet, his benefaction, albeit limited, will lead with certainty to Achilles' death. Τίμησόν μοι υἱόν, "honor my son" (*Il.* 1.505) says Thetis, and the word "son" makes Zeus remain silent for a while. The potential father (Zeus) will finally honor the son (Achilles) by leading him to his destined end.

Thus, another cosmic rival, albeit only a potential one, will perish. In the Theogonic tradition, the figures of the *mother and wife* (Gaia and Rhea) were responsible for initiating the overthrow of Ouranos and Kronos respectively;[32] but, in the *Iliad,* it is the figure of the *mother and potential wife* (Thetis) who will practically "ask" for the death of the son, not for the overthrow of the would-be husband (Zeus). The polytropic nature of Thetis,[33] a figure of *mêtis* who is endowed with *panourgia* ("trickery"),[34] is here exemplified.

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32 For Ouranos, see *Th.* 154–82 and for Kronos *Th.* 453–80.

33 The *panourgia* of Thetis has been interpreted by Slatkin 1986.22 as a result of her anger at not being allowed to marry a god. Thetis knows, as Loraux (1990.75) notes, that the price of the hegemony of Zeus is Achilles' death; Homer has transferred wrath from the mother to the son as her maternal *mênis* has been absorbed by the anger of Achilles. Loraux convincingly makes the point that between mother and son "le deuil et la colère sont indivis" (p. 75).

34 Cf. Vernant and Detienne 1978.159 who, following Herodotus (7.191–92), refer to the connection between Thetis and the cuttlefish (σηπία) and Aristotle who calls the cuttlefish the πανουργότατον of fish (*HA* 9.37, 59).

But the greatest paradox of Thetis' appeal is that she asks Zeus for one thing (to honor her son by leading him to his death) but means another (to immortalize him in terms of poetry). In antiquity, Thetis was connected with the cuttlefish since that was the last shape she took when she tried to escape from Peleus' hands. So, like a true cuttlefish, she metamorphoses herself by acquiring her son's perspective, but, at the same time, unnoticed, emits her θολόν (the dark juice of the cuttlefish) and deceives Zeus. She may be ἀργυρόπεζα (silver-footed, having a white color)[35] as she comes out from the swell of the sea (*Il.* 1.538), but her *epea* are, like her κάλυμμα (veil) in Book 24.93–95,[36] κυάνεα (dark blue).

Zeus will think for a while in silence; but, alas, his effort is doomed to fail in the face of the cunning turnings, the undulating and twisting tricks, of Thetis, the Iliadic counterpart of Hesiodic *Mêtis*.

3. THETIS' SECOND APPEAL (511–16)

Before Thetis makes her second appeal, three verses intervene. They are characterized by heavy internal punctuation (ὣς φάτο . . . ἀλλ᾽ ἀκέων δὴν ἧστο . . . γούνων / . . . ἐμπεφυῖα, . . . αὖτις). This sort of punctuation creates a staccato effect, as if the rhythm of the verse is restrained, not flowing. This hesitancy of the rhythm is strongly opposed to the following imperatives (ὑπόσχεο, κατάνευσον, ἀπόειπε) creating an emphatic antithesis: first hesitancy, then vehemence.

Verses 514–16 are carefully balanced. The first and the third are, in Kirk's terms, "two/fourfold and end-stopped, and the intervening 515 is three/fourfold, internally punctuated, and leading into its successor by fluent integral enjambment" (1985.107). The integral enjambment in 515–16 allows only a "minimal" interruption from one verse to the next, and it is in the next verse that the τιμή theme is mentioned. The significance of this particular verse construction is to lead the attention of the audience directly to the next and final verse of Thetis' second appeal (516) where the most important element of the speech is presented.

The rhythmical hesitancy described above, coupled with Zeus'

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35 For the connection between white, soft, and female, see Vernant and Detienne 1978.174, n. 139 with rich bibliography.

36 Not only does the poet describe her veil as dark blue in *Il.* 24.93–95 but he also says that there is no other darker garment (τοῦ δ᾽ οὔ τι *μελάντερον* ἔπλετο ἔσθος).

silence, is signified in the text by the separation of the two appeals which together form Thetis' request. I think that this matter is directly connected to Zeus' silence, which has not, at least to my knowledge, been explained. Achilles, by telling, or rather reminding, Thetis of the story of Briareos (*Il.* 1.399–406), makes her say to Zeus what he has practically said to Agamemnon. That is to say, Agamemnon owes his victories in the war to Achilles as Zeus owes his kingship to Thetis. This explains both Thetis' speech and Zeus' silence; for the father of gods replies to her requests only when she uses the word ἀτιμοτάτη in line 516, at the very end of her second appeal.[37] Thetis uses the notion of honor in the same way as Achilles, and Zeus answers only when Thetis complains that she occupies a position similar to that of Achilles after he was dishonored by Agamemnon. She becomes marginalized among the Olympians in the same way Achilles becomes marginalized among the Achaeans. What we see unfolding before us is the gradual transformation of Thetis into a mirror of Achilles. The mother, by adopting and passing to her own self the emotional viewpoint of the son, becomes *achillesized*.

The paradox of Thetis' supplication lies not only in the "illogicality" of her request but also in the reversal of the *tactics of reciprocity that she performs*. The illogicality is obviously concerned with the fact that her request will lead to her son's death; Thetis knows this, but still assumes a role that no mother would willingly undertake. On the other hand, if there is any matching inherent in the *logic* of this supplication, it is clearly reversed. Zeus resembles Agamemnon in that he is the superior among his peers. Achilles resembles Athena, Poseidon, and Hera in that he is challenging, in some way, the power and pre-eminence of the first of the Achaeans as they had challenged the supremacy of Zeus in the past.

Thus, Zeus' silence not only symbolizes the failure of Thetis' initial appeal but also marks a decisive point in the process of her supplication: *a point after which she changes the inner strategy of her request from the politics of reciprocity to the rhetoric of honor* (ὅσσον ἐγὼ μετὰ πᾶσιν ἀτιμοτάτη θεός εἰμι).

Although our chief concern is sound and rhythm and their hermeneutic impact, we should conclude with a brief look at the thematic structure of this speech; sound and rhythm are not incorporated into diction as if they

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37 One further point needs explanation. The two appeals were analyzed separately simply because they are separated in the text. Needless to say, they form one speech.

are external poetic devices, they are inseparable parts of diction that help the themes take their particular shape and become crystallized into text.[38]

4. THE THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF THE APPEALS

So considering the two appeals as one speech, we can see that, thematically, they present a circular structure and fall into that category of speeches which, as Lohmann 1970.10 has shown, use ring composition in their internal structure.

a. 503–504ᵃ:	Zeus father, if I ever helped you *among the immortals* either by word or deed
b. 504ᵇ:	Fulfill/*grant me this desire*
c. 505–506ᵃ:	*Honor my son*, who was destined to die sooner than all the others
d. 506ᵇ–507ᵃ:	But now *Agamemnon*, lord of men *has dishonored him*
d'. 507ᵇ:	For after snatching away the *honor that my son seized, he (Agamemnon) keeps it for himself:* ἔχει αὐτός
c'. 508:	*But honor him*, Olympian all-wise Zeus
(509–10:	Parenthetical, explaining the way Achilles should be honored by Zeus: give strength to the Trojans until the Achaeans honor my son and increase his *timê*)
b'. 514:	Promise me the truth and *nod in assent*
(515:	The alternative of refusal: or refuse, since for you there is no fear, so that I may know well)
a'. 516:	How much *among all*, I am the most dishonored goddess.

The thematic structure of this speech has the form of a ring composition: *a b c d d' c' b' a'*. At the center is the request to honor Achilles; it is

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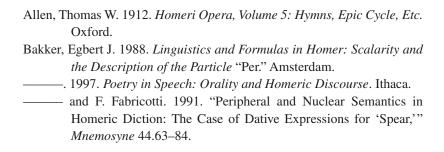38 I should make it clear that I do not necessarily mean here *written text* since textualization does not presuppose a transcript, but can very well be the result of a process—not an event—of evolution in composition, performance, and diffusion during which the Homeric tradition of epic becomes finally static, as Nagy 1996.109 has recently argued.

around this request that the other themes are built. Ring composition[39] is a sophisticated rhetorical device that repeats, albeit with slight modifications, in reverse order, the linear sequence that a speech follows initially. Therefore, it highlights the center of the speech (here the request that Achilles should be honored) and ends more or less in the same way that it began, thus creating the impression that the force of the request has been doubled, just as the thematic elements that formed this request are reiterated.

Our aim has been to show, in a particular section of an immense poetic composition, how sound in its various aspects (alliteration, rhythm, enjambment, etc.) influences the understanding of the Homeric text. In some cases, construction was also discussed. Of course, here and elsewhere doubts could be raised regarding the exploitation of the sounds in an ancient literary work in order to interpret or understand its most inner meaning. We can never be absolutely sure, since we don't know all of the aural specifics of ancient poetry or even of ancient Greek itself. We are also ignorant of the contribution of music to the process of recitation. On the other hand, some certainty can be guaranteed should we base our study "on the repetition of the sound only, ignoring its qualitative effect" (Kakridis 1971.129). One should always bear in mind that poetry, and especially Homeric poetry, was essentially an aural sequence, that "it was composed to be heard and that hearing it more or less aright is a precondition of understanding it" (Kirk 1985.24)—and appreciating it, one should add.

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39 For the importance of ring composition as a rhetorical and compositional device that shapes a specific type of speech, see Tsagalis 1997.31–73.

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