THE PROEM OF THE *ILIAD:* HOMER'S ART

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IN HIS proem (*Il.* 1. 1–7) the poet of the *Iliad* asks his Muse for the *Iliad*, and in asking for it has to say what it is. The proem thus states in brief compass the whole of which it is the introductory part. It is a kind of lyric at the head of the epic, a masterpiece of compression; here, even more than elsewhere, every word is made to tell.

The proem has been the object of special attention by the philologists.[1] What follows incorporates much from those predecessors. I shall be concerned, briefly, with establishing and construing the text, and also, at greater length, with interpreting it. These problems require us to set the text within a context, to display its language as a use of epic diction, its emphases as a choice of epic themes, its devices as an exploitation of an epic genre. We thus examine, in this one instance, the interplay between the "tradition" of the poet and his "individual talent."

T. S. Eliot reminds us, in the essay from which I draw these terms, that all poets are traditional. Nevertheless, Homer is a traditional poet in a special sense. The *Iliad* is, or at the very least is like, oral poetry, poetry created in performance by the rapid and relatively unreflective mobilization of traditional means. As we come to understand such poetry better, we begin to invent the philologies appropriate to it. Philology then reveals that the oral poet also is a creator. He handles his materials freely, and therefore meaningfully. I shall often draw attention to expressions atypical of epic usage; such expressions do not separate Homer from his tradition but rather display him as its master. The oral poet, like others, stretches his tradition as he puts it to use. I do not intend, therefore, a contrast between "formulaic" and "invented" language, but between more and less familiar or expected uses of the formulaic language, between (to borrow a contrast from the linguists) more marked and less marked expressions. Both have their place in epic art; both, indeed, appear in the proem.

I begin by setting out a text and offering an (unpoetic) translation:

$$\text{Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος}$$
$$\text{οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρί' Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,}$$

πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν
ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἑλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν
οἰωνοῖσί τε δαῖτα, Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή   5
ἐξ οὗ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε
Ἀτρεΐδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς

The wrath sing, goddess, of Peleus' son Achilles,
That cursed wrath, which inflicted countless pangs on the Achaeans;
Many potent shades she sent to Hades
Of heroes, and them she was preparing as prey to dogs,
And for birds a feast, and the word of Zeus was coming to completion   5
From that time when first those divided after quarreling,
The son of Atreus, king of men, and bright Achilles.

Certain features of this translation will be explained in the course of the paper, but there are two points which must be explained at the outset; on both points I follow Pagliaro. First, at the famous crux in line 5 I have adopted δαῖτα (the reading of Zenodotus, Athen. 12F), rather than πᾶσι, the reading of the manuscript tradition. Δαῖτα is confirmed by passages in tragedy which seem to paraphrase the proem, especially Aeschylus *Suppliants* 800–801: κυσὶν δ' ἔπειθ' ἕλωρα κἀπιχωρίοις / ὄρνισι δεῖπνον οὐκ ἀναίνομαι πέλειν. (Cf. also Eur. *Hec.* 1078, *Ion* 504–5.) Athenaeus reports ancient objections to οἰωνοῖσί τε δαῖτα on the ground that δαίς could be used only of human meals. Such objections could well have motivated the weak emendation πᾶσι, while it is hard to see why πᾶσι would have been replaced by δαῖτα. Furthermore, τεῦχε fits well with δαῖτα but would be odd with no object but ἑλώρια, since one is said, in the Homeric idiom, to "make" a meal but not to "make" prey.[2]

The second point has to do with the referent of ἐξ οὗ in line 6. If we take it with ἐτελείετο in line 5 (as did Aristarchus: schol. ad loc.), then the plan or word of Zeus is represented as being in the process of fulfillment from the moment of the quarrel. If we take it with ἄειδε in line 1 (the choice of most moderns), the Muse is being asked to begin the story from the point of the quarrel. But elsewhere, when it is a question of beginning a story at a certain point, the adverb used is spatial: τῶν ἀμόθεν γε . . . εἶπε (*Od.* 1. 10), ἔνθεν . . . ὡς (*Od.* 8. 500); cf. οἵμης τῆς (*Od.* 8. 74) and the spatial metaphor in μετάβηθι (*Od.* 8. 492). Ἐξ οὗ, by contrast, is a temporal expression, and is employed when a process has been going on, or a condition has obtained, since a certain moment.[3] An audience familiar with the Homeric idiom would thus take ἐξ οὗ with ἐτελείετο rather than with ἄειδε.

This interpretation of ἐξ οὗ gives us a proem which unfolds smoothly as a consecutive sentence, moving from the wrath, to its consequences, to its

2. These points are derived from Pagliaro's defense of δαῖτα in an essay first published in 1948, "Un riflesso Pitagorico nella tradizione del testo Omerico," *Saggi di critica semantica*[2] (Messina-Florence, 1961), pp. 127–31, and from his restatement of his arguments in "Proemio," pp. 35–37. The "correct" emendation would be κύρμα; cf. the phrase ἕλωρ καὶ κύρμα: *Il.* 5. 488, 17. 151; *Od.* 3. 271, 5. 473 (Pagliaro, "Proemio," p. 35, n. 21).

3. Pagliaro, "Proemio," pp. 11–12, reviews epic usage of ἐξ οὗ and quotes, as the closest parallel to the proem, *Od.* 11. 167–68: ἀλλ' αἰέν . . . ἀλάλημαι . . . ἐξ οὗ τὰ πρώτισθ' ἑπόμην Ἀγαμέμνονι δίῳ; he also compares *Od.* 14. 379.

connection with Zeus, and then to the crucial moment when divine purpose and human action intersected. I now proceed to a detailed study of that sentence.

The first word, μῆνιν, states the topic of the poem. Three points about this much-studied word are fundamental to the proem.[4] First, μῆνις and its derived verb μηνίω are used throughout the *Iliad* by both characters and narrator for Achilles' anger against Agamemnon (the noun occurs at *Il.* 9. 517, 19. 35, 19. 75—and a peculiar derived form, μηνιθμός, at *Il.* 16. 62, 16. 202, 16. 282; the verb at *Il.* 1. 422, 1. 488, 2. 769, 2. 772 = 7. 230, 9. 426, 12. 10, 18. 257, 19. 62); μῆνις, among the various Homeric words for anger, is the specific name of Achilles' wrath.[5] Second, the noun is in epic diction restricted, except for Achilles, to gods (the verb is used of other humans);[6] Achilles' anger is godlike, and others fear him as they would an angry god. Third, μῆνις includes an element of moral outrage; it is provoked by a bond broken, a hierarchy disrupted.[7] Μῆνις taps a cosmic power released by the disorder of a basic order. Achilles' anger thus has the demonic destructive power of a justified curse.

Achilles' anger is, of course, literally a kind of divine anger; with the

4. E. Schwyzer, "Drei griechische Wörter," *RhM* 80 (1931): 209–17; H. Frisk, "ΜΗΝΙΣ. Zur Geschichte eines Begriffes," *Eranos* 44 (1946): 28–40; J. Irmscher, *Götterzorn bei Homer* (Leipzig, 1950), pp. 5–8; P. Considine, "Some Homeric Terms for Anger," *Acta Classica* 9 (1966): 15–25; C. Watkins, "A propos de ΜΗΝΙΣ," *Bull. Soc. Ling. de Paris* 72 (1977): 187–209.

5. Achilles does not normally speak of his own rage as μῆνις but rather as χόλος—see esp. *Il.* 18. 107–10, where he speaks of the χόλος that drips down sweeter than honey and rises like smoke. Other speakers and the narrator also use χόλος and other words for anger far more frequently than μῆνις. Watkins, "A propos de ΜΗΝΙΣ," p. 194, notes that Homeric speakers never use μῆνις for their own state of mind, and concludes that such usage is definitely taboo (although the taboo does not extend to the verb [*Il.* 9. 426, 19. 62] or to the derived form μηνιθμός [*Il.* 16. 62, 16. 202]). It seems easier, however, to conclude that μῆνις means an objective relation, an anger dangerous to someone (and therefore usually so classified from the outside), while χόλος and κότος, "bile" and "rancor," are subjective conditions, experienced by the angry person.

Achilles applies words derived from μῆνις to his own frame of mind only when he is speaking of it as a definite position to which he is committed. Probably his rage does not become a μῆνις until after Athena's intervention and his oath by the scepter; at this point a flash of rage is transformed into a settled determination. The first use of the term after the proem applies it only indirectly to Achilles; after the oath ᾿Ατρεΐδης δ᾿ ἑτέρωθεν ἐμήνιε (*Il.* 1. 247). Agamemnon responds to μῆνις with μῆνις. The first application to Achilles is Thetis' imperative: μῆνι᾿ (*Il.* 1. 422); later the narrator, describing the new state of affairs, says of Achilles: ὁ μήνιε (*Il.* 1. 488). Evidently there is something settled and lasting about μῆνις; it is "colère durable" (P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, vol. 3 [Paris, 1968], s.v.).

6. We must be alert to differences in the semantic range of nouns and their denominative verbs; in other cases also the range of the verb is the wider. For instance, νέμεσις is a human emotion, "not used of the gods in Homer" (LSJ, s.v.), but the derived verbs νεμεσάω and νεμεσίζομαι are frequently used of the gods—of their outrage with one another and with men. Αἰδώς is a feeling evoked in men by their relations with other men or (twice) in a god by another god, but the verb αἰδέομαι is used also of human respect for the gods (cf. H. Ebeling, *Lexicon Homericum* [Leipzig, 1885], s.vv.).

7. Zeus may feel μῆνις against a god who disregards his authority (*Il.* 5. 31–34; *Od.* 5. 146–47) or who defies his thunderbolt (*Il.* 15. 122; cf. 15. 115–18). Men rouse the μῆνις of Apollo if they dishonor his priest (*Il.* 1. 75; cf. 1. 94–95), think themselves equal to the gods (*Il.* 5. 444; cf. 5. 440–42), or defy fate (*Il.* 16. 711 = 5. 444; cf. 16. 707–8). The μῆνις of an unnamed god may follow failure of sacrifice (*Il.* 5. 177–78), defilement of an enemy (*Il.* 22. 358; cf. 22. 338–43), or failure to bury a friend (*Od.* 11. 72–73). Zeus (*Il.* 13. 623–25; *Od.* 14. 283–84) or unnamed gods (*Od.* 2. 66–67) may be roused to μῆνις against those who break the bond of hospitality. Similarly, human μῆνις is provoked by offenses against authority (*Il.* 1. 247) or merit (*Il.* 13. 460), against host (*Od.* 16. 376–82) or guest (*Od.* 17. 10–15).

help of his goddess mother he can bring the gods into action to avenge his wrongs. In so doing he lets loose in the world a power which is greater than himself and ultimately beyond his control. The proverb says: χαλεπὴ δὲ θεοῦ ἔπι μῆνις, "the wrath of a god is harsh, when it comes" (*Il.* 5. 178). Divine μῆνις can bring the plague (*Il.* 1. 75) or civil strife (*Od.* 3. 134–36); it can set a city in flames (*Il.* 21. 522–24). Achilles' wrath is on such a scale; aimed at Agamemnon, it reaches out to bring destruction on his whole community.

Furthermore, Achilles, although he is half a god, is still a man; we are reminded in the second half of this line that he is son of Peleus. His wrath thus falls on his own people and ultimately, through Patroclus, on himself. The first line of the *Iliad* qualifies the hero in terms of his divine wrath and his human father, and thus places him between god and man. This ambiguous status is the source of his tragedy. The chosen starting point of the epic thus has implications which are unfolded in the poem's overall plot.

The words ἄειδε, θεά place the proem within a generic type, the invocation to the Muse.[8] At the same time the words chosen are atypical of the genre. Normally the Muse is asked, not to "sing," but to "say."[9] The Muses are themselves singers, and sing among the gods as the bards sing among men (*Il.* 1. 603–4; *Od.* 24. 60–61; *Theog.* 36–52), but the bard who invokes the Muse does not expect to bring their song into the world of men; rather the Muse, who gives song to men (*Od.* 8. 64, 8. 498; *Theog.* 104; Hes. frag. 310 M.-W.; Archil. frag. 1 West), will "impel the bard to sing" (*Od.* 8. 73). The Muses "teach" the bard (*Od.* 8. 488) and "make to grow" in him the οἶμαι, the paths of song—that is, themes and stories. They are the daughters of Memory (*Theog.* 54; Solon 1. 1 West) and remind the bard of what he might otherwise forget (*Il.* 2. 492). They are a source of information, and their inspiration guarantees the truth of the song. But the voice which is heard is not that of the Muse, but of the bard. When, therefore, the bard asks the Muse not to "speak" to him but to "sing," a complex relation is somewhat simplified. The bard in effect claims that his song is the authentic voice of the goddess.

As the poet brings the Muse directly on the stage, so he addresses her, relatively informally, as θεά. This vocative is proper, not to a prayer such as this invocation, but to face-to-face conversation with a goddess; in such a context the word has a tone of formal propriety.[10] Similarly, in a prayer

8. There are five invocations internal to the *Iliad*: 2. 484–93, 2. 761–62, 11. 218–20, 14. 508–10 16. 112–13. There are also the initial invocations of the *Odyssey* (1. 1–10), and *Erga* (1–10), and the *Eoiai* (Hes. frag. 1 Merkelbach and West). The *Theogony* begins with a complex hymn to the Muses, which closes with an invocation of them (104–15). The invocatory first lines of the *Thebais* and *Epigonoi* are preserved: T. W. Allen (ed.), *Homeri Opera*, 5:112.

9. In Homer the verb is ἔννεπε if the Muse is singular (*Il.* 2. 761; *Od.* 1. 1), ἔσπετε if the Muses are plural (*Il.* 2. 484, 11. 218, 14. 508, 16. 112).

10. Vocative θεά is twice used by superior to inferior deities (*Il.* 15. 93, 24. 104)—perhaps to reassure them that their status will be respected, as Hermes says he will tell the truth "as one god to another," θεὰ θεόν (*Od.* 5. 97). Humans use it most often to signal their recognition of a goddess (*Il.* 1. 216, 5. 815, 18. 182; *Od.* 13. 312, 20. 37; cf. *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 185), or to signal the relevance of divine status as when Achilles calls Thetis' attention to her power (*Il.* 1. 401) or Odysseus tells Calypso why he cannot trust her (*Od.* 5. 173, 5. 178).

a speaker who has already called a goddess by name may also call her θεά (*Il.* 10. 290; *Od.* 20. 61); we find this usage in the proem to the *Odyssey*, where θεά (*Od.* 1. 10) is anaphoric to Μοῦσα (*Od.* 1. 1). To pray to a goddess simply as θεά, however, assumes that the correct goddess will know she is being addressed, and this in turn assumes a preexisting relation between speaker and goddess. There are only two other instances of this form of address in Homer (*Il.* 10. 462, 23. 770—the narrator tells us that both prayers are to Athena): both are by Odysseus to the goddess who is always close to him (cf. *Il.* 10. 278–79; *Od.* 3. 221–22, 13. 314–15).

The first three words of the *Iliad* thus introduce us into a numinous world; a godlike wrath will be sung by a bard who is himself close to the divine source of song.

These first three words, with their consecutive trochaic word breaks, are metrically anomalous, and it has been held that they are "nonformulaic."[11] One can as easily think, however, that ἄειδε, θεά (metrical anomaly and all) was the regular expression in a proem after a trochaic topic word ending in a consonant, and this notion is confirmed by the only parallel case in early epic, the first line of the *Thebais*: Ἄργος ἄειδε, θεά, πολυδίψιον ἔνθεν ἄνακτες (Allen, *Homeri Opera*, 5:112). Since, moreover, μῆνις was the traditional name for Achilles' wrath, since a proem usually began with a topic word,[12] and since Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος is the usual name-formula for Achilles in the genitive case after the masculine caesura, we can hold that the entire first line was "dictated" to the poet from the moment he chose his topic. And this conclusion would seem to invalidate the analysis offered above, since the poet could not mean anything special by words he had no choice about.

This view vastly overrates the rigidity of formulaic composition; we should be cautious about deriving strict rules from evidence which is after all fragmentary. Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος (in violation of the principle of economy) has, in fact, an alternative in this position: μεγαθύμου Πηλείωνος (*Il.* 18. 226, 19. 75—in the second instance modifying μῆνις). Invocations of the Muse, at least in the *Hymns*, do not always begin with a topic word (*Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 1; *Hymn.* 19. 1). Another, less gifted, bard might have begun, Μοῦσα μοι ἔννεπε μῆνιν Ἀχιλλῆος θείοιο. . . . And in any case formulae are meaningful. I concede that, as an adjective becomes fixed in combination with a noun, and as the combination becomes a normal unit in a specific metrical context, the two parts lose independent meaning. The whole combination becomes "lexicalized"; ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς hardly means anything different from Ἀχιλλεύς (although even here the greater length of the combined form adds an emphasis). But it is also true that the latent implications in the most familiar combinations can be contextually evoked; if the context made us think of Achilles' feet, we would notice ποδάρκης in a different way.[13] The first line of the *Iliad* is rich in such implications.

11. By J. A. Russo, "A Closer Look at Homeric Formulas," *TAPA* 94 (1963): 235–47, esp. p. 240.
12. See Van Groningen, "Proems," p. 284.
13. We can observe the poet avoiding unwanted implications (and violating the principle of economy) at *Il.* 23. 168, where the next line begins with a reference to the feet of Patroclus, and Achilles is called (uniquely) μεγάθυμος instead of πόδας ὠκύς. See W. Whallon, *Formula, Character and Context* (Washington, D.C., 1969), p. 59.

Whether we ascribe the richness to the poet or to his tradition, it remains a poetic success.[14]

There is, however, a different, stylistic, point about formulaic composition, which is exemplified by this first line. The first three words are highly "marked"; even if they are normal in a proem, a proem itself is a highly marked environment, in contrast to the run of the narrative. The second hemistich, which consists of the expression most usual in this syntactic and metrical context, is less marked. The first line thus exemplifies the familiar rule that hexameters become more formulaic toward the end. We hear the line as composed from left to right. The poet, having set himself a metrical problem in the first part of his line, solves it with an item from his formulaic repertoire. This involves a shift from relatively free, and therefore relatively meaningful, syntagmata, to relatively lexicalized units. The first hemistich consists of three lexemes; the second, in effect, of only one. Information is thus transmitted at an uneven rate. The run of the meter, with its alternation of asymmetrical hemistichs, is complemented by a variation of semantic density, and this contributes to that correlation of semantics with phonology characteristic of poetic utterance.

Similarly, phonology correlates with syntax. The first word of line 2, οὐλομένην, an adjective in concord with the first word of line 1, exemplifies another general stylistic feature: the tendency toward ambiguous syntactic end-stopping of the line. What has appeared to be a closed syntactic unit is, in effect, reopened by the first item of the following line. Ἡρώων in line 4 works much the same way. Milman Parry has called this feature "unperiodic enjambement."[15] It helps the singer to dramatize the process of his thought; he seems to think one line at a time (as he no doubt often did in the process of oral composition). Having established the μῆνις as his theme, he now finds something more to say about it.

From one point of view οὐλομένην adds little, since it is a notably unspecific negative adjective, covering a range from inadequate to unfortunate to harmful to outrageous. It is a term of general rejection. It is, however, also an adjective applied, exclusively in the *Iliad* and predominantly in the *Odyssey*, to persons (*Il.* 5. 876, 14. 84, 19. 92; *Od.* 4. 92, 11. 410, 17. 484, 18. 273, 24. 97). Four times in the *Odyssey* it is applied to objects, always with a touch of personification; the things mentioned (Circe's drugs, *Od.* 10. 394; Achilles' armor, *Od.* 11. 555; the belly, *Od.* 15. 344, *Od.* 17. 287) are more than mere instruments, and have a kind of life of their own. So we can say that οὐλομένην personifies the μῆνις.[16]

We should also note that this adjective is used elsewhere in the epics exclusively in speeches; it has a tone of subjectivity, and expresses a personal rejection of another person or personified thing. The bard thus brings before us his own reaction to, almost his distaste for, his theme.

14. As Michael Nagler, *Spontaneity and Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1974), p. 61, says, "It is necessary to recall . . . from time to time . . . that the art language cannot compose for a poet or even, in the last analysis, restrict what he means to say."

15. "The Distinctive Character of Enjambement in Homeric Verse," *TAPA* 60 (1929): 200–220, esp. pp. 205–7.

16. This personification is noted by Pagliaro, "Proemio," p. 5, n. 6.

The personification is developed in the relative clause which follows: ἥ
μυρί' Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε. Elsewhere the giver or sender of ἄλγεα is a god
or a curse.[17] It is once said that gods and men can inflict ἄλγεα on each
other (*Il.* 5. 384), but the only particular human actor who inflicts ἄλγεα
is Achilles (*Il.* 22. 422). Ἄλγε' ἔθηκε thus has the same semantic range as
μῆνις; the relative clause reinforces our sense of the μῆνις as a numinous
agent.

In the next three lines the poet specifies the ἄλγεα. The problem here is
not what the poet means to say, but why he says it. We might expect at
this point some foretaste of the plot; instead the fate of the heroes is stated
in the most general terms. Their shades were sent to Hades, while they were
left to the birds and dogs. This last statement, further, is puzzling because
in the *Iliad* no bodies are ever left to the birds and dogs; such treatment of
the dead, while often threatened, and even attempted, is never enacted.[18]
The proem thus presents a scene which will not occur in the poem.

Let us begin by examining one puzzling phrase: ἰφθίμους ψυχάς. Ἴφθιμος
is an obscure adjective; it may well be that by Homer's time it was an
archaic word, used only in the epic language, and of uncertain meaning to
the poet himself. But it does seem to have implications of potency—of
physical strength, or fertility, or both.[19] The ψυχή, on the other hand, is the
typically impotent thing; it has no function for the living man except to
leave him at death, and its later fate is a mere existence, twittering and
flittering in the dark underworld.[20]

Line 3 is similar to *Iliad* 11. 55, where, as Zeus sends down a rain of
blood, we are told that he intended πολλὰς ἰφθίμους κεφαλὰς Ἄϊδι προϊάψειν.
Similarly, in Hesiod fragment 204. 118–19 M.–W., we are told of Zeus's
intentions for the Trojan War:

> . . . π]ολλὰς Ἄϊδηι κεφαλὰς ἀπὸ χαλκὸν ἰάψ[ει]ν
> ἀν]δρῶν ἡρώων.

In the proem the subject is not Zeus but the μῆνις; nevertheless, we are
about to be told that all this was somehow a fulfillment of Διὸς . . . βουλή.
The poet seems in the proem to be drawing upon familiar language for
Zeus's intention to produce destruction at Troy.

Ἰφθίμους κεφαλάς in *Iliad* 11. 55 is closer to normal Homeric usage than
is ἰφθίμους ψυχάς in line 3 for two reasons: κεφαλή is a word elsewhere ac-
companied by adjectives (although nowhere else by the adjective ἴφθιμος),
and ἴφθιμος is used with another word for "head" in a fixed line employed
four times in descriptions of arming: κρατὶ δ' ἐπ' ἰφθίμῳ κυνέην εὔτυκτον ἔθηκεν.

17. Zeus: *Il.* 2. 39, 2. 375, 18. 431, 24. 241; *Od.* 4. 722. Zeus and Poseidon: *Il.* 13. 346. Apollo:
Il. 1. 96, 1. 110. The South Wind: *Od.* 12. 427. Unnamed gods: *Il.* 19. 264; *Od.* 14. 39. Curses: *Od.*
11. 279, 19. 330. It will be noted that the distribution of ἄλγεα is close to that of μῆνις; both are
particularly associated with Zeus and Apollo.
18. Cf. Pagliaro, "Proemio," pp. 29–33. For a sensitive review of all relevant passages, see
C. Segal, *The Theme of the Mutilation of the Corpse in the "Iliad,"* Mnemosyne, suppl. 17 (Leyden,
1971).
19. See J. Warden, "ΙΦΘΙΜΟΣ: A Semantic Analysis," *Phoenix* 23 (1969): 143–58; and Pagliaro,
"Proemio," pp. 21–23.
20. Cf. Pagliaro, "Proemio," p. 22.

On the other hand, line 3 of the proem "is the only instance in the *Iliad*
or the *Odyssey* where ψυχή is qualified by a descriptive epithet. This would
suggest that of the two lines 11. 55 is the prototype."[21] The poet, in other
words, has in the proem varied his familiar language in order to replace
κεφαλάς by ψυχάς.

The substitution was made easy for him by the close association of the
ψυχή with the head,[22] and by the fact that the ψυχή of the dead man is
regularly said to be sent to Hades, as in the formulaic phrase ψυχὴν δ' ῎Αϊδι
κλυτοπώλῳ (three times). The poet is working with the resources of the
formulaic language. Nevertheless, line 3 is odd. The oddity is not entirely
semantic, for "potent shades" is not much odder than "potent heads"—
the head is not a potent part of Homeric man, whose power lies in his limbs
and midriff. The real oddity is syntactic; the poet has produced a unique
syntagm: ψυχή + adjective. We must seek his motivation for including
ψυχή in the line at the expense of the normal syntactic privileges of that
word. The explanation is to be found in the use of αὐτούς in line 4.

Αὐτός is a pronoun which "topicalizes" its antecedent. A person or object
is marked as the focus of interest, in contrast to other items which, although
they may be syntactically parallel, are of less interest to the speaker. Very
often αὐτός focuses attention on a person in contrast to his parts or posses-
sions.[23] Thus in lines 3 and 4 the ψυχή, a part or possession, departs, while
the dead hero remains on the field.

In the normal expression, κεφαλὰς ῎Αϊδι προϊάψειν, the κεφαλή is in fact
metaphorical for the ψυχή.[24] The poet could not, however, use the normal
expression followed by αὐτούς; the literal sense would have asserted itself.
He would have seemed to say that a part of the body was sent away while
the body remained on the field. The poet therefore inserted ψυχάς, not
because he particularly wanted ψυχάς, but because he wanted an acceptable
substitute for κεφαλάς.

Αὐτούς, then, motivates ψυχάς.[25] The dead bodies are spoken of as the
heroes themselves, the ψυχαί as mere accessories. We should note that this
notion is peculiar to the proem.[26] Usually the dead person goes to Hades

21. Warden, "ΙΦΘΙΜΟΣ," p. 154. Pagliaro (not cited by Warden) reviews much the same
material and comes to similar conclusions: "Proemio," pp. 23–29.

22. R. B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought* (Cambridge, 1951), pp. 95 ff.; Warden,
"ΙΦΘΙΜΟΣ," pp. 153–57.

23. Cf. P. Chantraine, *Grammaire homérique*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1963), p. 156; and Pagliaro, "Pro-
emio," p. 10, n. 7.

24. Pagliaro, "Proemio," pp. 24–25, says (and I agree) that, even if the phrase reflects some
earlier custom of decapitating the enemy, in the Homeric idiom "to send the head to Hades"
simply means "to kill."

25. That αὐτούς in line 4 requires ψυχάς in line 3 has been seen since ancient times: cf. schol. ad
7. 330, 11. 55; it has been held (cf. G. M. Bolling, *The Athetized Lines in the "Iliad"* [Baltimore,
1944], pp. 43–44) that ψυχάς was substituted for κεφαλάς when lines 4 and 5 were interpolated in
the proem. My own interpretation is close to that of Pagliaro, "Proemio," p. 23.

26. *Contra* E. Rohde, *Psyche*⁴ (Tübingen, 1907), p. 5. The closest parallels are *Il.* 16. 856–58 =
22. 362–64 (with a difference of proper name in the last line). Here the ψυχή goes off to Hades,
while the victor continues to harangue the corpse: τὸν καὶ τεθνηῶτα προσηύδα. Τόν here is un-
emphatic; the victor speaks to the corpse as if it were not dead, treats it, irrationally, as a person.
Rohde also cites *Il.* 23. 103–7, but this passage makes no reference to the dead body, only to the
fact that Patroclus' ψυχή looks just as he did in life.

and leaves his body behind.[27] With some perturbation of normal usage the poet here focuses our attention on the fate of the dead bodies. This focus, I would suggest, looks forward to the last third of the epic. Achilles' μῆνις, announced in the proem as the theme, is (in a narrow sense at least) concluded by the beginning of Book 16, when Achilles declares that his rage has passed (*Il.* 16. 60–61). Thereafter Achilles' story centers on the deaths of two heroes and the fates of their bodies. Patroclus dies, his body is recovered from the enemy, and Achilles gives him an elaborate funeral. Achilles takes his revenge, kills Hector, and attempts to feed his body to the dogs. Finally Hector also is recovered by his city and properly buried. In its overall structure the *Iliad* moves from themes involving the social relations of the heroes—themes of honor and of the destruction which springs from dishonor—to themes involving the defilement and purification of the dead. The proem, formally, refers only to the first part of this story, to the destruction brought by the μῆνις on the Achaeans. Yet in its structure the proem shows a parallel development, as it traces the consequences of the μῆνις from suffering (ἄλγεα) to death to defilement.

The notion of defilement is made concrete in the words that follow: ἑλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν / οἰωνοῖσί τε δαῖτα. The use of τεύχω here, as a causative over an embedded nominal-predicate sentence (i.e., to mean "made *x* into *y*"), is highly marked and unique in the *Iliad;* the normal Homeric causative is τίθημι.[28] Τίθημι is the verb in line 2, where, oddly enough, τεῦχε would have fitted comfortably (cf. ἄλγεα τεύχει at *Il.* 1. 100 and related phrases at *Il.* 13. 346 and *Il.* 21. 585), just as θῆκε would have fitted in line 4.[29] If we seek a poetic motivation for τεῦχε, we find it, I think, in a further oddity: τεύχω is not a normal verb with ἑλώρια, since one is not said to "make" prey but to "leave" it (ἐᾶν, λείπειν). Τεύχω, on the other hand, is one of the normal verbs for preparing a meal.[30] As we go through the chiastic series, prey–dogs, birds–feast, the choice of verb is justified only by the last item. Τεῦχε (in contrast to the more neutral θῆκε) thus serves to knit the whole expression together, and puts a special stress on δαῖτα.

27. In similar phrases with προϊάψειν the object is a simple personal pronoun (*Il.* 5. 190, 6. 487; cf. 8. 367, 21. 47–48); the vanquished is sent to Hades. The ψυχή continues the adventures of the bodily person, as in Polydamas' rough joke: some Argive has been pierced with a spear "and now I suppose he can use it as a staff while walking down to the house of Hades" (*Il.* 14. 456–57). The dead hero—that is, the dead body—must be protected, but at the same time he has gone away in the form of his ψυχή. Thus Patroclus says: "Bury me as quick as you can, that I may pass within the gates of Hades, for the ψυχαί keep me away" (*Il.* 23. 71–72). He is both there and here.

28. Cf. Ebeling, *Lexicon Homericum*, s.v. τίθημι 5. There are two causative uses of τεύχω in the *Odyssey* (13. 190–91, 13. 397), but there also the normal causative verb is τίθημι. Perfect middle forms of τεύχω are used in Homer as agentless passives, and thus as simple copulas; contrast *Il.* 6. 300 τὴν γὰρ Τρῶες ἔθηκαν 'Αθηναίης ἱέρειαν, where we have a stated agent with τίθημι, with the agentless use of τεύχω at *Il.* 16. 604–5 ὃς Διὸς ἱρεὺς . . . ἐτέτυκτο.

29. "Αλγε' ἔθηκε is a normal expression; cf. *Il.* 22. 422. The problem is not that ἔθηκε is out of place in line 2, but that τεῦχε is out of place in line 4. The whole sentence would be more normal if the two verbs were reversed.

30. Pagliaro, "Riflesso," p. 130, assembles the evidence for τεύχω used with δαίς, δόρπον, and δεῖπνον, and for the verbs used with ἔλωρ, as part of his argument for reading δαῖτα as against πᾶσι. In none of the passages involving meals is the use of τεύχω causative; in *Od.* 9. 291 and 9. 344, where we might have expected some such phrase as τοὺς . . . τεῦχε . . . δόρπον, we find instead that the material of the meal is made the object of a subordinate participial clause.

Δαῖτα has been the problem word in the proem since ancient times.[31] The association of dogs with birds is familiar in threats of defilement (*Il.* 2. 393, 8. 379, 13. 831, 17. 241, 18. 271, 22. 42, 22. 335, 22. 354, 24. 411; *Od.* 3. 259), but the association of prey with feasting is not.

Elsewhere in the *Iliad* ἕλωρ (the developed form ἑλώρια is unique to the proem) is used of the dead body left to despoilment by the enemy (*Il.* 5. 488, 5. 684, 17. 151, 17. 667, 18. 93), in the *Odyssey*, of bodies left as carrion for animals (*Od.* 3. 271, 5. 473, 24. 292).[32] The notion of ἕλωρ thus marks an intersection of the human and animal spheres. The warrior's "catch" is sometimes mutilated with bestial playfulness (*Il.* 11. 146–47, 13. 202–5, 14. 498–500, 20. 481–83). At war, as the *Iliad* similes often remind us, man becomes to man as man to beast or beast to beast; war negates society.

The δαίς, by contrast, is in Homer the institution wherein society pre-eminently becomes peaceful (cf. *Il.* 1. 573–83, 9. 68–78). A δαίς is literally a "sharing"; through the sharing of meat at the δαίς status is respected (*Il.* 12. 310–21) and merit is recognized (*Od.* 8. 474–83). Here man is joined with man and with god through council, hospitality, song, sacrifice, and prayer.

The use of δαῖτα for the carrion meal of the beasts is thus a strong and (as the ancient critics complained) rather repulsive metaphor. While ἑλώρια points to an intersection between categories, δαῖτα suggests the deletion of the categorical contrast between men and beasts. The complex phrase suggests the analogies: warriors:victims::dogs:prey and birds:carrion:: men:meat.

More than once in the *Iliad* it is suggested that these two analogies could be collapsed into warrior:victim::man:meat, that the perfection of victory would be actually to consume the vanquished (*Il.* 3. 23–28, 13. 198–202, 18. 161–64, 22. 261–65, 24. 212–13). The most explicit statement is by Achilles just before he kills Hector (*Il.* 22. 346–54): "If only I could cut you into raw meat and eat you myself," he says, but as it is: κύνες τε καὶ οἰωνοὶ κατὰ πάντα δάσονται. (In this context we may hear in δάσονται an echo of the cognate noun δαίς: "the birds and dogs will share you out [as at a feast].")

At only one other place in Homer is δαίς used as in the proem for the meal of an animal: Apollo says (*Il.* 24. 33–54) that Achilles in defiling Hector's body ἄγρια οἶδεν; he is like a lion who comes down on the flock ἵνα δαῖτα λάβῃσιν. The lion feasts [like a man]; if we fill out the symmetrical ellipses of what I take to be a complex comparison, we shall say that Achilles is like a beast [who feeds on his prey].[33]

Achilles of course is no cannibal; rather the theme of cannibalism repre-sents, as a logical extreme case, the dehumanization of the enemy, his

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31. The vulgate tradition, as we saw, emended it away; Zenodotus, who read δαῖτα, athetized lines 4 and 5; cf. Pagliaro, "Proemio," p. 5.

32. And once (*Od.* 13. 208) of property left abandoned.

33. A pictorial reflection of this theme of latent cannibalism can be seen in Attic vase paintings, by Oltos and the Brygos painter, of Achilles feasting over Hector's body; the blood from the meat of the feast (picked out in red paint by Oltos) runs down onto the corpse beneath the table. These items are nos. 20*g* and 20*i* in K. Friis Johansen, *The "Iliad" in Greek Art* (Copenhagen, 1967), p. 267.

reduction to a mere thing to be mastered. I have argued elsewhere that such dehumanization is central to the terror of the *Iliad*.[34] Here I add that δαῖτα in the proem (as in Apollo's simile) suggests the same theme, as it were, inside out. In the poem men become bestial; in the proem the carrion-eating beasts do a man-like thing. What is presented in the proem as an objective fact about beasts appears in the poem (where no bodies are ever eaten by the beasts) as a subjective tendency of men, who in battle become somewhat like predators or scavengers.[35]

The proem adds that all this was somehow according to the will of Zeus: Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή. At least five interpretations of this much-discussed phrase[36] can be defended; while there are objections to them all, I shall be arguing my way through four in favor of the fifth.

First, the poet may have in mind no specific plan or intention of Zeus; he may mean simply that these events, like all events, were somehow "god's will."[37] Agamemnon and Achilles themselves speak of their quarrel this way: since it happened, Zeus must have willed it (*Il.* 19. 86–90, 19. 270–74). But this way of talking is characteristic only of the characters in epic, not of the epic narrator, who, when he speaks of the βουλή of Zeus (e.g., *Od.* 1. 86; *Theog.* 465, 730; *Erga* 71, 79, 99; *Hymn. Hom. Cer.* 9; *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 23) means some definite plan or contrivance of the god.[38] Similarly, Zeus himself, when he speaks of the fall of Troy 'Αθηναίης διὰ βουλάς (*Il.* 15. 71), means the contrivance of the Trojan Horse.

A second interpretation would hold that the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon was itself contrived by Zeus for some purpose of his own. The evidence for this interpretation is Proclus' reference, at the end of his account of the *Cypria*, to a Διὸς βουλὴ ὅπως ἐπικουφίσῃ τοὺς Τρῶας 'Αχιλλέα τῆς συμμαχίας τῆς 'Ελληνικῆς ἀποστήσας (Allen, *Homeri Opera*, 5:105).[39] This interpretation receives, however, no support from the text of the *Iliad;* there the quarrel is the result, not of divine contrivance, but of human error. Agamemnon refuses to return the priest's daughter and thus brings down the plague; the assembly called by Achilles (instigated by Hera, not Zeus—*Il.* 1. 55) to correct this error is badly handled and brings about further error.[40]

34. J. M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the "Iliad": The Tragedy of Hector* (Chicago, 1975), pp. 183–203.

35. Pagliaro, "Proemio," pp. 29–34, gives a somewhat different account of the transformation: defilement, which appears in the poem as a threat (that is, as a rhetorical element), appears in the proem as a fact of experience. The poet, he says, thus displays his detachment from the literary tradition; he is able to revive a somewhat faded rhetorical terror to vivid actuality.

36. W. Kullmann, "Ein vorhomerisches Motiv im Iliasproömium," *Philologus* 99 (1955): 167–92, includes extensive bibliographical notes referring to earlier discussions of the phrase.

37. This position has been held: cf. Kullmann, "Motiv," p. 167, n. 2. S. E. Bassett, "The Three Threads of Plot of the *Iliad*," *TAPA* 53 (1922): 53, refers to it as "today the most commonly accepted interpretation."

38. Cf. Kullmann, "Motiv," p. 168, n. 1.

39. Cf. ibid., pp. 177–78, and Kullmann's *Die Quellen der "Ilias,"* Hermes Einzelschriften, 14 (Wiesbaden, 1960), pp. 210–11.

40. Cf. A. Lesky, "Göttliche und menschliche Motivation im homerischen Epos," *SBHeidelberg*, phil.-hist. Kl., 1961, pt. 4, pp. 16–17; and Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, pp. 91–98.

A third interpretation (probably now the most popular)[41] refers Διὸς . . . βουλή in the proem to the events which follow the quarrel in the poem, to the intervention by which Zeus, in order to make the Greeks feel the consequences of Achilles' μῆνις, contrives a temporary success for the Trojans. Within the *Iliad* itself Διὸς βουλή and related phrases usually refer to this intervention by Zeus (cf. *Il.* 11. 79, 12. 235–42, 13. 347–50, 13. 523–25, 15. 592–602, 16. 121, 17. 331–32). I see, however, two objections to finding this meaning in the proem. First, if we take ἐξ οὗ with ἐτελείετο, the statement will, by this interpretation, be untrue; the intervention of Zeus does not immediately follow the quarrel but occurs only after a lapse of many days (cf. *Il.* 1. 423–27). Zeus does not finally take charge of the battle until the beginning of Book 8. (Perhaps this difficulty, as much as anything else, has caused critics to take ἐξ οὗ with ἄειδε, a syntactic interpretation which, as we saw, is unsatisfactory on other grounds.) Second, the contrivance of Hector's brief success originates, not with Zeus, but with Thetis, who demands it of Zeus as an ἐέλδωρ (*Il.* 1. 504). The poet reminds us of this fact in the course of his narrative (*Il.* 13. 347–50, 15. 69–77, 15. 592–602), and Athena says of Zeus: Θέτιδος δ' ἐξήνυσε βουλάς (*Il.* 8. 370). But the language of the proem seems to imply the initiative of Zeus himself; the Διὸς . . . βουλή is mentioned as a primary fact about the poem to follow, whereas within the poem it is a secondary result of other events. Such misrepresentation of the poem by the proem is (as we have seen) far from impossible, but it should be motivated, and I see no clear motive for it here.

A fourth interpretation refers to the proem of the *Cypria*, where it is said that Zeus determined to lighten the earth of her burden of men; he therefore stirred up war against Troy where ἥρωες κτείνοντο. Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή (Allen, *Homeri Opera*, 5:118). The view that Διὸς . . . βουλή has the same referent in the identical phrases of the proems of the *Cypria* and the *Iliad* has been impressively championed by Wolfgang Kullmann, who has collected from the *Iliad* more than a dozen passages where some general intention of Zeus to massacre the heroes may be implied.[42] This evidence is not quite persuasive; not one of these passages brings the implication to the surface. We can find Kullmann's meaning in them only if we read them with the *Cypria* (and other non-Iliadic passages—especially *Erga* 156–73 and Hes. frag. 204. 96–119 M.-W.) in our minds.[43] The plan of Zeus to exterminate the heroes may be a latent theme in the *Iliad*, but it remains latent; the Homeric story is focused on the responsibility of the human actors for their own destruction. Even the intervention of Zeus on behalf of the Trojans (the Διὸς βουλή within the poem) is the result of Achilles' initiative to Thetis; the god, as it were, becomes an instrument of the man.

41. Kullmann, "Motiv," p. 169, n. 1; this interpretation goes back to Aristarchus and was championed by Bassett, "Three Threads," p. 54.

42. Kullmann, "Motiv," pp. 170–75 (citing *Il.* 2. 3–4, 2. 37–40, 11. 52–55, 12. 13–18, 12. 20–23, 13. 222–27, 19. 86–88, 19. 270–74, 20. 21); pp. 190–92 (citing *Il.* 2. 110–15, 9. 17–25, 12. 231–50, 14. 69–70, 22. 208–12). The latter group are held to refer "indirectly" to the plan of Zeus. Cf. also Kullmann's "Zur Διὸς βουλή des Iliasproömiums," *Philologus* 100 (1956): 132–33, citing *Il.* 14. 83–87 and 17. 647.

43. Cf. Kullmann, *Quellen*, p. 47, n. 2.

We may move toward a fifth interpretation by observing that our phrase occurs in one other place in early hexameter: *Odyssey* 11. 281–97 tells of a seer whose θεοῦ . . . μοῖρα cast him in prison until the fated time was fulfilled; then Iphicles his captor released him, Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή. The scholiast (ad loc.) explains the phrase: "because Zeus had told the seer that he would be overcome by Iphicles." In other words, the seer recognized the will of Zeus in the correspondence of the event to his foreknowledge of it.

This association of Διὸς βουλή with foreknowledge and prophecy is strengthened by passages in which that phrase means the content of an oracle (*Od.* 14. 328 = 19. 296; *Hymn. Hom. Ap.* 132; *Hymn. Hom. Merc.* 538). *Odyssey* 8. 73–82 suggests that Διὸς . . . βουλή may have this meaning in the *Iliad* proem also. Here Demodocus sings of the quarrel between Achilles and Odysseus which arose at a feast, and how Agamemnon rejoiced in his heart that the best of the Achaeans were quarreling, since Apollo had spoken to him when he came to Delphi:

> τότε γάρ ῥα κυλίνδετο πήματος ἀρχή
> Τρωσί τε καὶ Δαναοῖσι Διὸς μεγάλου διὰ βουλάς.

[*Od.* 8. 81–82]

This story should belong to the first arrival of the Greeks at Tenedos,[44] and is most economically explained by assuming that Agamemnon had received an oracle that Troy would fall after the best of the Achaeans quarreled. The oracle had a false and premature fulfillment in a quarrel between Achilles and Odysseus; the true fulfillment was the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon (the real "best of the Achaeans") which opens the *Iliad*.[45] By this interpretation the words in lines 5 and 6 of the proem mean: "the will of Zeus [as foretold] was [finally] coming to pass from the time those two divided . . ." (hence my translation: "the word of Zeus"). The promise given long ago at Delphi when "the beginning of trouble was in motion" (*Od.* 8. 81) was at last to be kept.[46]

In fact the train of events which originates with the quarrel in Book 1 of the *Iliad* leads to the death of Hector, which assures the fall of Troy (*Il.* 24. 380–85); thus it is true that the μῆνις, while it brings great suffering on the Greeks, also makes certain their promised victory.

This interpretation is subject to one mighty objection: no one in the *Iliad* ever speaks of the μῆνις as the fulfillment of a prophecy. But we can say that this interpretation is not inconsistent with the poem, and is consistent with epic linguistic usage.

44. In other words, this was the quarrel portrayed by Sophocles in the *Syndeipnoi* (frags. 139–53 Nauck).
45. This is the interpretation of Pagliaro, except that he places the quarrel at Aulis ("Proemio," pp. 17–20); I also derive from him the interpretation of the proem in the light of Demodocus' story.
46. Agamemnon may actually be referring to this oracle and its deceptive fulfillment when he complains that the promises of Zeus have not been kept (*Il.* 2. 110–18 = 9. 17–25). He cannot be referring to the omen described by Odysseus (*Il.* 2. 299–332), since this predicted success in the tenth year, and it is exactly the nine-year delay of which Agamemnon complains (*Il.* 2. 134–35).

Within the proem Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή draws attention to the paradoxical relation between Zeus and the Achaeans. Zeus wills the victory of the Achaeans, but their victory comes about only because they endure a crushing disaster. The proem develops from wrath to suffering to death to defilement before it comes to Zeus. The frame continually widens; it begins with the single hero, then includes his living community, then the human dead, then the animals—birds and dogs. Finally it includes also the god; we move abruptly from the lowest to the highest. The association of Zeus with the carrion scavengers is reinforced by the aspect of the verbs. Ἔθηκε and προΐαψεν are aorists, while τεῦχε and ἐτελείετο are imperfects; we are thus led to associate the verbs in pairs, and to see, not the death of the heroes, but their defilement, as the special accomplishment of Zeus.

Yet here also the proem is at odds with the poem. Zeus does not will the defilement of the dead; on the contrary, he arranges the funerals of Sarpedon (Il. 16. 666–83) and Hector (Il. 24. 110–19). If we take Zeus as the high god, representative of the gods in general, the contrast is even sharper; for, while the gods may require the destruction of mortals, they do not, as Hera explicitly says (Il. 16. 450–57), require their defilement (although they may predict it: Il. 8. 379–80). If we ask why the defilement of the dead does not occur in the Iliad, the simple answer is that the gods prevent it. Hera sees to it that the Trojans do not capture the body of Patroclus (Il. 18. 165–86), and Thetis keeps the maggots from him (Il. 19. 30–33). Aphrodite keeps the dogs from Hector (Il. 23. 184–87) and Apollo protects his body (Il. 23. 188–91, 24. 18–21).

But the implication of the proem is partly right: the gods desire and contrive the reciprocal violence which leads the heroes to fear and to intend the defilement of the dead. God sends war, and as war feeds on itself the heroes become more vindictive than even the gods. At one point, when Zeus says that Hera might wish to eat Priam and his children raw (Il. 4. 31–36), the poet suggests that even the gods might be drawn into bestial impurity. At the end, with the gods' help, there is purity and healing, as there was for Niobe (Il. 24. 613–14). But in the proem, by his association of Zeus with the vultures, the poet suggests the demonic power of the forces which Zeus lets slip.

From this point the proem winds down to its conclusion; lines 6 and 7 give the sense of an ending. We return to the human world, to a particular action and particular actors. 'Εξ οὗ δή focuses on a particular moment, which is then specified by the remainder of line 6. Διαστήτην, while returning us to the theme (Achilles' withdrawal from battle) with which the proem began, introduces a development from the singular to the dual; what had appeared in line 1 as Achilles' solitary wrath now is shown to have its source in a quarrel between two parties. There is thus a shift from theme to plot, from the μῆνις to its causes. In the process the wrath is somewhat "demystified"; we shift from the numinous μῆνις to the more mundane ἔρις which underlies ἐρίσαντε. Διίστημι, similarly, is a rather colorless verb, meaning "divide" or "go in opposite directions": its five other uses in

Homer (*Il*. 12. 86, 13. 29, 16. 470, 17. 391, 21. 436) have no connotation of hostility.

'Ερίσαντε, an aorist participle, states an event prior in time to the finite verb it modifies;[47] we might translate the phrase, "parted, having quarreled." Line 7 names the subjects of the verb. The poet is telling his story backward; the proem is not in narrative but in logical order. It responds to the questions: What story is it? Why is it worth telling? How does it begin and with whom?[48]

Line 6 is hardly familiar; there are no complex units in it which recur, and the words of which it is made have no fixed places in the line[49]—with the exception of τὰ πρῶτα, which appears here in its normal place just before the caesura.[50] Line 7, on the other hand, is entirely composed of familiar phrases, mostly in their familiar positions. 'Ατρεΐδης occurs more than half the time at the beginning of the line, and δῖος 'Αχιλλεύς is invariably at the end of the line. The motion from free composition to fixed language, and from compact to diffuse transmittal of information (line 7 consists, in effect, of two proper names), which, as we saw, is characteristic of the structure of the line, is here expanded in scale, so that the motion is from a free line to a formulaic line. Just as the familiar line-ending formulae give a sense of closure to a particular line, so here the familiar phrases of line 7 give a sense of closure to the proem as a whole.

Yet, just as there is a touch of the familiar in line 6, so there is an unfamiliar touch in line 7. "Αναξ ἀνδρῶν, most frequently used (as here) as an epithet of Agamemnon, occurs in Homer some fifty times. Everywhere else, however, it occurs just after the caesura. Here and only here the phrase has been shifted to the first half of the line.[51] Our attention is drawn to the phrase, so that its latent semantics are brought to the surface. While Agamemnon is always ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν, the epithet has a special relevance here; the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles was so dangerous and insoluble precisely because Agamemnon was "king of men."

Since the verbal phrase in line 6 is in the dual, it requires two names to supply its subject; line 6 looks forward to line 7, and the syntax is not complete until the last word in that line: 'Αχιλλεύς. This completion of the syntax, when it arrives, also contributes to a sense of having reached a full stop. The proem as a whole moves from the accusative μῆνιν to the nominative 'Αχιλλεύς, from the hero's act as the object of song, to the hero as

47. Cf. R. Kühner, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache*, vol. 1² (Hannover, 1869), p. 199.

48. In actually beginning his story, the poet goes back one further step and asks: who provoked them to quarrel? He then goes back one step further still, and tells how Agamemnon angered Apollo, how Apollo's anger led to the plague, and how the plague led to the quarrel.

49. Of the sixteen instances of ἐξ οὗ cited by Pagliaro ("Proemio," pp. 11–12), about half occur at the beginning of the line. I suggest, however, that it is misleading to take this as a formulaic feature; more properly it is an outcome of the tendency in the Homeric style for metrical and syntactic segments to correspond, so that items which open a clause tend also to open the line. On the originality of διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε, see Russo, "Closer Look," p. 246.

50. Πρῶτον and πρῶτα which, taken together, appear more than 140 times in Homer, appear more than twice as often just before the caesura as in all other positions put together.

51. As noted by Pagliaro, "Proemio," p. 38.

actor. The link between the first word and the last frames the whole as a unity;[52] the proem is over, and the poem is ready to begin.

In conclusion a few general remarks may be in order. The proem has long been admired for its clarity and compactness;[53] here we have also examined the poetic devices which make it expressive: personification—in the development of μῆνιν through οὐλομένην and ἄλγε’ ἔθηκε; metaphor—especially in δαῖτα; variation of tone—in the contrast between μῆνιν and ἐρίσαντε. We have found the proem to be a formed unity with a beginning, middle, and end, beginning and ending with Achilles, and centering on the dogs and birds, and on Zeus.

The proem does not tell us what the story will be, but suggests, by the elements chosen for inclusion, what the story will be about. The *Iliad*, it tells us, will explore the relations between man, beast, and god; it will be a story of suffering and death, and will go beyond this to tell of the ultimate fate of the dead. The fundamental device of the proem, as in all of Homer, is parataxis; the relevance of elements to one another is implied by their mere conjunction. This is an art of resonance and implication; precisely because the elements are familiar they come before us charged with meaning.

Where so much is familiar, further, every unfamiliar touch is meaningful—a fresh phrase like ἰφθίμους ψυχάς; a familiar word used in an unfamiliar way, like τεῦχε; even a familiar phrase in an unfamiliar position, like ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν. The familiar itself, balancing the unfamiliar, could be used to give the style shape, and vary its pace. The epic tradition may be thought of as the ground against which Homer displayed the figure of his art.

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52. Cf. Bassett, "Proems," p. 340; and Rüter, *Odysseeinterpretationen*, p. 30, n. 6.
53. Cf. Rüter, *Odysseeinterpretationen*, p. 33.