PROTAGORAS' ACHILLES: HOMERIC ALLUSION AS A SATIRICAL WEAPON (PL. *PRT.* 340A)

δοκῶ οὖν μοι ἐγὼ παρακαλεῖν σέ. ὥσπερ ἔφη Ὅμηρος τὸν Σκάμανδρον πολιορκούμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως τὸν Σιμόεντα παρακαλεῖν, εἰπόντα—φίλε κασίγνητε, σθένος ἀνέρος ἀμφότεροί περ σχῶμεν, ἀτὰρ καὶ ἐγὼ σὲ παρακαλῶ, μὴ ἡμῖν ὁ Πρωταγόρας τὸν Σιμωνίδην ἐκπέρσῃ.

So now I'm resolved to call on you for help. Just as Homer says Scamander called on Simoeis for help when he was attacked by Achilles, in these words, "Dear brother, let both of us restrain the man's strength." So I call on you to help stop Protagoras utterly demolishing Simonides.[1]

Socrates utters these words at a critical point of the dialogue, when he has just been cross-examined and successfully refuted by Protagoras. "As if hit by a good boxer" (339e), Socrates feels dizzy, tries to gain time, and finally calls on Prodicus for help with two Homeric lines referring to Achilles' assault on the river god Scamander.[2] Why does Socrates quote these lines? To be sure, Homer is the very basis of Greek *paideia,* so quotations from and allusions to the poems hardly need to be accounted for. Nonetheless, Plato is such a careful writer that hardly anything seems to be casual in his dialogues. Nowadays, there is an increasing awareness that at least some of his poetic quotations and allusions have a specific point, so it is always worthwhile to look for "hidden" meanings (that is, meanings that, for various reasons, are difficult for modern scholars to recognize but could be obvious for Plato's original audiences). In the following, I will sketch two different types of Homeric allusion in the *Protagoras,* which I shall be referring to as "doctrinal allusion" and "malicious mythology." Finally, I will argue that Socrates' Iliadic quotation, far from being coincidental, falls under both types and reveals an unnoticed satirical vein on Plato's part.[3]

Doctrinal allusion is palpable at *Protagoras* 337c–38b, where Hippias tries to settle the dispute between Socrates and Protagoras over the proper length of *logoi*. As has recently been pointed out, Hippias' speech is modeled on that of Nestor in *Iliad* 1 (254–84), where the wise king tries to reconcile Agamemnon and Achilles.[4] Not only are there similarities of content,[5] but Hippias' very language is unmistakably

1. *Prt*. 340a, trans. C. C. W. Taylor.

2. Hom. *Il*. 21.308–9.

3. I use "satirical" in a broad sense, implying no link with Roman *satira*.

4. See A. Brancacci, "Il *Logos* di Ippia: Plat. *Protag*. 337c–338b," in *Il "Protagora" di Platone: Struttura e problematiche,* ed. G. Casertano (Naples, 2004), 390–401.

5. As is shown by Brancacci, "*Logos*" (n. 4 above), 395: "Un primo parallelismo è dato dall'analogia della situazione. Nestore viene presentato inoltre come "arguto oratore" (λιγὺς . . . ἀγορητής, A248): il poeta insiste sulla dolcezza del suo eloquio (A249), nonché sulla sua saggezza (A253), e le due qualità coniugate lo caratterizzano come prototipo mitico dell'eloquenza saggia e misurata. Analogamente, Platone introduce il sofista di Elide riservandogli l'epiteto Ἱππίας ὁ σοφός (337c7), gli pone in bocca un lungo e retoricamente ben strutturato intervento, gli affida il ruolo di mediatore tra Socrate e Protagora caratterizzandolo come predicatore e consigliere di dignità, buona pace e misura. . . . Come il Nestore omerico, infatti, anche Ippia ammonisce e rimbrotta efficacemente i due contendenti ricordando i vincoli superiori che li uniscono e debbono unirli: nel testo omerico Nestore dichiara che è la 'terra achea' (A254) che si trova colpita da 'gran male' per la contesa che divide 'i primi dei Danai per consiglio e in battaglia' (A258); nella pagina platonica il dissidio appare a Ippia indegno del gruppo degli intellettuali convenuti in Atene, definita come il pritaneo stesso della σοφία. . . ."

reminiscent of Homer's passage.[6] What is the point of such an allusion, though? Now, Hippias was a devoted Homerist, and Nestor was arguably his favorite character, as is suggested elsewhere by Plato himself.[7] Moreover, through the writings of Hippias and Antisthenes, Nestor soon became synonymous with good rhetoric, as a champion of the *genus medium.*[8] This explains why in our passage Hippias resorts to Nestor's speech when trying to strike a balance between Socrates' harsh *brevitas* and Protagoras' lofty and lengthy style. Through Homer, Plato alludes to Hippias' Homeric *doctrina,* thus providing an instance of doctrinal allusion.

Malicious mythology is best exemplified by *Protagoras* 314e–16a, one of the most brilliant scenes in the entire corpus. The pompous sophists and their slavish pupils are packed into the house of Callias. The crowning touch of Socrates' ironic description are two quotations from Homer's *Nekyia,* whereby he equates Prodicus with Tantalus and, implicitly, Protagoras with Sisyphus.[9] Generally speaking, Plato depicts the sophists and their pupils as the witless shadows inhabiting Homer's Hades. More to the point, both Sisyphus and Tantalus are famously punished because of their hostility towards the gods. As a consequence, they soon became a symbol for atheism and rebellion against the gods, along with other notorious sinners such as Ixion.[10] We happen to know that both Prodicus and Protagoras had to face allegations of impiety.[11] By associating them with such notorious sinners, Plato is no doubt maliciously hinting at this disgraceful background.

Clearly, in the two examples mentioned the boundaries between doctrinal allusion and malicious mythology tend to blur. On the one hand, Hippias' "Homeric" speech is self-indulgent to the point of becoming grotesque, so it is hard not to detect sarcasm on Plato's part. On the other hand, Plato's mythological hints sound malicious as well as somewhat doctrinal, because Protagoras famously declared that it is impossible to determine whether the gods exist or not.[12] But was Plato that sarcastic? Absolutely, if we give due credit to a tradition emphasising the iambic quality of some of his

6. See Brancacci, "*Logos,*" 396: ". . .Nestore, con identici modi linguistici e identica *actio,* si rivolge prima ad Agamennone poi ad Achille, chiedendo a entrambi di rinunciare a quanto di eccessivo v'è nella condotta di ciascuno. La ripresa è segnalata nel modo più chiaro dalla formula μήτε σύ + infinito, che, collocata in posizione distintiva nell'allocuzione di Nestore (essa compare per due volte di seguito a breve distanza e a inizio di verso), è ripresa alla lettera da Platone a segnalare il rinvio al modello omerico; nonché dalla formula ἀλλὰ πίθεσθε che, utilizzata anch'essa per ben due volte da Nestore nel suo intervento, è stata ripresa da Platone per rendere ancor più chiaro all'ascoltatore o lettore colto il rinvio a quel modello."

7. Pl. *Hp. mi.* 364c = 86 A 10 DK; *Hp. mai.* 286a–b = 86 A 9 DK; see also Philostr. *V S* 22.4.

8. Brancacci, "*Logos,*" 396–400.

9. On this scene see, e.g., I. Klär, "Die Schatten im Höhlengleichnis und die Sophisten im homerischen Hades," *AGP* 51 (1969): 225–59; R. B. Rutherford, "Unifying the Protagoras," in *The Language of the Cave,* ed. A. Barker and M. Warner, *Apeiron* suppl. 26 (Edmonton, 1992), 133–56.

10. One thinks of the famous *Sisyphus* attributed either to Euripides or to Critias. See, e.g., D. F. Sutton, "Critias and Atheism," *CQ* 75 (1981): 33–38. Anaxagoras, too, was compared to Tantalus because of his alleged impiety (59 A 1, 8; A 20a DK).

11. On Prodicus, see A. Henrichs, "The Atheism of Prodicus," *CronErcol* 6 (1976): 14–21, where *PHerc.* 1428, frag. 19 and 84 B 5 DK are discussed. On Protagoras, the main sources are Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F196 and Plut. *Per.* 32.2. Whether Protagoras was then banned from Athens only to die at sea while fleeing the country is a much-debated issue. Here the champion of scepticism is O. Gigon, "Studien zu Platons Protagoras," in *Phyllobolia für Peter von der Mühll* (Basel, 1946), 91–152. For an opposite view, and for recent bibliography, see A. Capra, "Platone e la storia: La fine di Protagora e lo statuto letterario dei dialoghi socratici," *Acme* 53 (2000): 19–37.

12. 80 A1, A12, B4 DK.

dialogues.[13] Among other things, Athenaeus claims that the *Protagoras* is even sharper than Eupolis' *Flatterers,* a comedy that shares the same setting and violently attacks the agnostic sophist and his patron Callias.[14] With all of this in mind, let us return to our Platonic passage and Homeric lines.

Protagoras was a renowned critic of Homer, and his exegesis was not limited, as has often been wrongly stated, to the "correctness' (*orthoepeia*) of single words. On the contrary, Protagoras is one of the few ancient critics who is concerned with problems of structure and internal consistency as well.[15] What is more, he seems to have been interested precisely in the episode from which the lines quoted in the *Protagoras* are taken: a Homeric *scholion* reports that according to Protagoras the episode of the battle between Achilles and the river-god Xanthos/Scamander was composed in order to arrange the battle into phases, to prepare the transition to the following scene (the battle of the gods), and possibly to extol Achilles.[16] As a consequence, Socrates' quotation of those Homeric lines is likely to be an instance of doctrinal allusion to Protagoras' Homeric exegesis.[17] But what is the point of such an allusion?

The Homeric episode can be construed as one of *hubris* against the gods, because Achilles does not hesitate to fight against a fluvial deity. From a Platonic point of view, his behavior is seriously impious, and it comes as no surprise that his assault on the river god is sharply criticized in the *Republic.*[18] On the contrary, according to Protagoras this very same episode is a structurally crucial one, possibly empha-

13. See, e.g., P. Angeli Bernardini and A. Veneri, "Il Gorgia di Platone nel giudizio di Gorgia e l''aureo' Gorgia nel giudizio di Platone (Athen. 11, 505d–e)," *QUCC* 36 (1981): 149–60.

14. Ath. 11.506f–507a: ὁ δὲ καλὸς αὐτοῦ Πρωταγόρας πρὸς τῷ καταδρομὴν ἔχειν πολλῶν ποιητῶν καὶ σοφῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκθεατριζόμενον ἔχει καὶ τὸν Καλλίου βίον μᾶλλον τῶν Εὐπόλιδος Κολάκων. ἐν δὲ τῷ Μενεξένῳ οὐ μόνον Ἱππίας ὁ Ἠλεῖος χλευάζεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ Ῥαμνούσιος Ἀντιφῶν καὶ ὁ μουσικὸς Λάμπρος. ἐπιλίποι δ' ἄν με ἡ ἡμέρα, εἰ πάντας ἐθελήσαιμι ἐπελθεῖν τοὺς κακῶς ἀκούσαντας ὑπὸ τοῦ σοφοῦ ("But his beautiful *Protagoras,* besides containing invectives against numerous poets and men of wisdom, also exposes the life of Callias more theatrically than *The Flatterers* of Eupolis does. In the *Menexenus* it is not only Hippias of Elis that is held up to mockery, but also Antiphon of Rhamnus and the Musician Lamprus. But the day would fail me if I should wish to proceed with all who were abused by the philosopher" [trans. C. B. Gulick]).

15. For an insightful reconstruction of Protagoras' position on the matter, see A. Brancacci, "Protagora e la critica letteraria," in ΟΔΟΙ ΔΙΖΗΣΙΟΣ: *Le vie della ricerca: Studi in onore di F. Adorno* (Florence, 1996), 109–19; A. Brancacci, "L'orthoepeia et la justesse des noms," in *Platon, source des Présocratiques,* ed. M. Dixsaut and A. Brancacci (Paris, 2002), 169–90. Brancacci rightly stresses that Protagoras' *orthoepeia* includes a rhetorical dimension, taking into account the structure of poems.

16. Σ *Il.* 21.240 (p. 101 Erbse, 19–25) = 80 A 30 DK = *CPF* I.1***, 88 2T (*POxy.* CCXXI, in Grenfell and Hunt, Oxyrh. Pap. 2, p. 68, col. XII, 19–25): δεινὸν δ' ἀ[μ]φ' Ἀχι{λ}λῆα κυκ[ώμενον] ἵστατο κῦ[μ]α· Πρωταγόρας φησ[ὶ πρὸ]ς τὸ διαλαβεῖν τὴν μάχην τὸ ἐ[πεισό]διον γεγονέναι τὸ ἐξῆς τῆς Ξά[νθου κα]ὶ θνητοῦ μάχης, ἵν' εἰς τὴν θ̣εομ[αχία]ν̣ μεταβῆ‹ι›· τάχα δὲ ἵνα καὶ τὸν [Ἀχιλ]λέ[α] αὐξήση‹ι›. . . . It is impossible to determine whether the thought introduced by τάχα should be regarded as Protagorean as well, but I think that Plato's allusion makes this more likely than not.

17. Cf. B. Manuwald, *Platon: "Protagoras," Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Göttingen, 1999), ad loc.: "Es ist möglicherweise kein Zufall, dass Platon eine Stelle aus einem Zusammenhang verwendet, zu dem sich auch Protagoras geäussert hat." To the best of my knowledge, Manuwald is the only scholar hinting at a possible, if vague, connection between Socrates' quotation and Protagoras' Homeric exegesis.

18. *Resp.* 391a–b: ὀκνῶ δέ γε, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, δι' ″Ομηρον λέγειν ὅτι οὐδ' ὅσιον ταῦτά γε κατὰ Ἀχιλλέως φάναι καὶ ἄλλων λεγόντων πείθεσθαι, καὶ αὖ ὡς πρὸς τὸν Ἀπόλλω εἶπεν· ἔβλαψάς μ' ἑκάεργε, θεῶν ὀλοώτατε πάντων· ἦ σ' ἂν τισαίμην, εἴ μοι δύναμίς γε παρείη· καὶ ὡς πρὸς τὸν ποταμόν, θεὸν ὄντα, ἀπειθῶς εἶχεν καὶ μάχεσθαι ἕτοιμος ἦν ("And for Homer's sake—I said—I hesitate to say it's not holy to say these things against Achilles and to believe them when said by others; or, again, to believe that he said to Apollo, 'You've hindered me, Far-Darter, most destructive of all gods. And I would revenge myself on you, if I had the power'; and that he was disobedient to the river, who was a god, and ready to do battle with it" [trans. A. Bloom]).

sizing the defiant strength of Achilles. By equating Protagoras with an occasionally godless Achilles and by reminding his auditors of his sympathy for such *theomachoi,* Plato is once again maliciously hinting at the sophist's alleged impiety.[19] As in the cases mentioned above, doctrinal allusion and malicious mythology merge and overlap so as to form a picture of unexpected aggressiveness, which suddenly surfaces from the placid waters of Socrates' usual *urbanitas.*[20] Athenaeus was right, and we can conclude by saying that among the many qualities of Plato's style one can certainly count a genuinely satirical vein.[21]

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19. Moreover, one must not forget that the protagonist of the myth delivered by Protagoras in the dialogue (320c–22d) is Prometheus, arguably the most notorious *theomachos* of Greek mythology. All of these references can hardly be coincidental.

20. Through mythological allusion and other similar devices, Plato can address his audiences over the heads of his characters. Socrates and Protagoras may well be unaware of the impending allegations against the sophist, and from their point of view there may be no double entendre in Socrates' Homeric quotations. Yet Plato, writing some decades after the death of both, shares with his audiences a full knowledge of the facts, so that the very same words are given a second, sinister meaning. For a good account of this literary technique, somewhat reminiscent of the so-called tragic irony, see D. Clay, *Platonic Questions: Dialogues with the Silent Philosopher* (University Park, Penn., 2000), 33–40.

21. Warm thanks to A. Brancacci, F. Caizzi, and J. Haubold.

AN ALLUSION TO OVID IN CLAUDIAN'S *CARMINA MINORA* 22.56

Ovid's influence on the poems of Claudian has long been recognized.[1] Recently, M. L. Ricci and F. Consolino have explored the constellation of allusions that link Claudian's *Carmina Minora* (*c.m.*) 22, the so-called *Deprecatio ad Hadrianum,* to the programmatic situation of Ovid's exile poetry.[2] Ricci has demonstrated how Claudian's allusion at *c.m.* 22.27–31 to *Tristia* 3.5.31–36 is part of a broader interaction of vocabulary and imagery linking *c.m.* 22 to the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*.[3] Consolino has further illuminated how Claudian's allusions and structuring

1. The editions of T. Birt (Berlin, 1892) and L. Jeep (Leipzig, 1876–79) remain the starting points for any discussion of allusion in Claudian. Ovid's influence on Claudian has been most extensively, although not exhaustively, addressed by A. H. Eaton, *The Influence of Ovid on Claudian* (Washington, D.C., 1943).

2. M. L. Ricci, "Il carme minore 22 di Claudiano e l'Ovidio dell'esilio," *InvLuc* 20 (1998): 221–28; F. Consolino, "Poetry and Politics in Claudian's *Carmina Minora* 22 and 50," in *Aetas Claudianea: Eine Tagung an der Freien Universität Berlin vom 28. bis 30. Juni 2002,* ed. W.-W. Ehlers, F. Felgentreu, and S. M. Wheeler (Munich, 2004), 142–74. The link between *c.m.* 22 and Ovid's exile poetry has also been noted in passing by M. Bonvicini, D. Giodrano, and R. Mazzanti, *P. Ovidio Nasone, "Tristia"* (Milan, 1991), 323, and M. L. De Gubernatis, "Claudianus," *Enciclopedia italiana di scienze, lettere ed arti* (Rome, 1932), 543–44.

3. Ricci discusses how the narrators of *c.m.* 22.27–40 and *Tr.* 3.5.31–36 call on their addressees to show *clementia* by recalling Achilles' mercy to Priam and Alexander the Great's compassion towards Darius and Porus. Both passages also mention the lion and other animals to highlight the natural order of the strong fighting the strong. Other similarities between Ovid's exile poetry and *c.m.* 22 include the use of *telum*/*-a* to symbolize aggressive eloquence (*c.m.* 22.8; *Tr.* 4.1.36), the narrators describing their ruin as *vulnera* (*c.m.* 22.8; *Tr.* 1.1.99, 3.11.64), and the narrators comparing themselves to Telephus (*c.m.* 22.46–49; *Tr.* 5.2.15–16, 2.19–22; *Pont*. 2.2.26). In addition to these parallels, the appearance of *exul* (*c.m.* 22.25) is also noteworthy.