Transactions of the American Philological Association 123 (1993) 15-25

Perjury and the Unsworn Oath*

Cathy Callaway
University of Missouri–Columbia

Iliad 15.36-40 and *Hymn to Hermes* 4.274-76 & 383-84 are oath-scenes in which, at first reading, Hera and Hermes seem to perjure themselves in oaths sworn to other gods. Scholars such as Hirzel assume over and over again that these scenes represent typical oaths: previous discussions therefore revolve around whether or not the statements in the oaths are technically false.[1] I shall argue in these three apparent cases of divine perjury that the oath has not in fact been sworn, but only offered. Whether an oath has actually been sworn or not is an important distinction in relation to perjury, lying, and the attitude of the gods towards each. This article will attempt to shed light on these considerations.

Circe's oath to Odysseus (*Od.* 10.343-346) provides an example of an oath-scene which follows the basic pattern as established by Arend.[2] Kirk (1981: 62) points out the dangers in using Homeric evidence to glean the details of ritual actions in sacrifice, and the same may be said for the act of oath-taking. Consistency is supplied by the formulaic nature of the typical scenes, he states, but these formulae are selective. Homer does not include every detail in each occurrence of a ritual, but I begin with the premise that in the typical scenes the elaboration, simplification, or omission of the elements is carried out with regard for the tone and significance of an episode.[3]

The first element of a typical oath-scene is the Invitation, or the Calling for an Oath (the Introduction in cases where the oath is offered rather than

*I am grateful to Deborah Boedecker, Susan Cole, Sander Goldberg, Michael Halleran, Susan Iles Johnston, and Robert Seelinger for their valuable comments and criticism.

[1]Hirzel 13, 17, 20, 22, 25, 34, etc. Other opinions of other scholars will be cited later. Unless otherwise stated, Greek citations are from T.W. Allen's Oxford Homer and Allen, Halliday, and Sikes, *The Homeric Hymns*.

[2]Arend's model for typical oath-scenes in Homer furnishes a useful way to examine these scenes (122-23). I have added the Introduction, Call to Witness, Qualifications, and Repeated Tenor to Arend's schema, most of which he identified but did not include in the pattern. The Circumstantial or Temporal Qualification, a subcategory of the Tenor, states a condition that must be met for the Tenor to be fulfilled or what can prevent the Tenor from being fulfilled. This subcategory is not a concern for the purposes of this article. For further discussion, see Callaway 9-21.

[3]For further discussion, see Edwards 5 and Callaway, particularly Chapter 6.

invited). Odysseus says to Circe: εἰ μή μοι τλαίης γε, θεά, μέγαν ὅρκον ὀμόσαι (343). The Call to Witness (or Invocation) is a subordinate element which summons a deity, force, or object to act as a surety for the promise.[4] Circe's oath contains no Call to Witness, but Calypso swears by the following forces in *Od.* 5.184-186:

> ἴστω νῦν τόδε γαῖα καὶ οὐρανὸς εὐρὺς ὕπερθε
> καὶ τὸ κατειβόμενον Στυγὸς ὕδωρ, ὅς τε μέγιστος
> ὅρκος δεινότατός τε πέλει μακάρεσσι θεοῖσι.
>
> Let the earth and wide heaven above be witness
> to this now, and the down-flowing water of Styx, which
> to the blessed gods is the greatest and most terrible oath.

The Tenor is the element which spells out the requirements for the oath: μή τί μοι αὐτῷ πῆμα κακὸν βουλευσέμεν ἄλλο (*Od.* 10.344). The Execution, which usually appears in narrative, describes the actual swearing of the oath. For example, Odysseus tells his audience: Ὣς ἐφάμην, ἡ δ' αὐτίκ' ἀπόμνυεν ὡς ἐκέλευον (345). The Conclusion, which also usually appears in narrative, portrays the completion of the oath: αὐτὰρ ἐπεί ῥ' ὄμοσέν τε τελεύτησέν τε τὸν ὅρκον (346). The presence of either of these last two elements confirms the actual swearing of an oath in a typical scene.

How does the poet indicate whether an oath is actually sworn? In typical oath-scenes, where the poet supplies all four elements in a formal manner, it is stated explicitly that the oath is sworn, as in Circe's oath to Odysseus. In an oath-scene containing an identifiable Execution or Conclusion (even if these are not formal elements with the expected vocabulary), the oath can be determined to have been sworn. In addition, oath-scenes which are told completely in narrative provide the Conclusion.[5]

---

[4]Of the twenty-six oath-scenes in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, fifteen contain some form of Call to Witness. The Call to Witness is most commonly a subsection of the Invitation/Introduction element (eight of fifteen), but can also appear in the Tenor (three of fifteen), or the Execution (four of fifteen). Some are repeated: witnesses may be directly invoked in the Invitation, while in the Execution it will be affirmed that these were sworn by. Hera is said to have sworn by the Titans in the Execution of *Il.* 14.278-9, after Hypnos invoked the witnesses in the Invitation; at *Il.* 10.321 Dolon suggests the scepter, after which Hector uses the scepter and invokes Zeus as well in the Execution (328-329). For more on the Call-To-Witness element in Homer, see Mülder 7-34, particularly 13-22 and 33-34, and Bollack 1-35, who includes collation and discussion of literary references to Styx.

[5]For example, Helen tells of her oath to Odysseus: ... καὶ ὤμοσα καρτερὸν ὅρκον (*Od.* 4.253). We need not assume that the narrator is telling the truth about an oath, but in these cases

When an oath is invited, that is, when a character urges another character to swear, and the character invited to swear responds positively to the request, we can assume that the oath is sworn.[6] Odysseus in disguise offers an oath to Eumaeus (*Od.* 14.151-164), but Eumaeus' response, ἀλλ' ἦ τοι ὅρκον μὲν ἐάσομεν ... (171), shows that he refused the oath. The Invocation which Odysseus included in his offer would not be activated until the oath is sworn. Eumaeus did not annul the oath's effect, nor was the bond invalid because he refused to be associated with Odysseus' Invocation. Rather, Eumaeus refused to participate in the religious act of the oath, an act which involves two parties (Bollack 5), and in this way the oath was never put into force.

In Book 15 of the *Iliad* Hera offers an oath to Zeus in an abbreviated form of the typical oath-scene. Zeus has awakened from the sleep Hera devised for him and is in a fury when he sees the Argives routing the Trojans and Hector lying wounded on the plain (15.4-13). He accuses Hera of intervening, and her fear compels her to begin an oath without Invitation (15.36-40):

> ἴστω νῦν τόδε Γαῖα καὶ Οὐρανὸς εὐρὺς ὕπερθε
> καὶ τὸ κατειβόμενον Στυγὸς ὕδωρ, ὅς τε μέγιστος
> ὅρκος δεινότατός τε πέλει μακάρεσσι θεοῖσι,
> σή θ' ἱερὴ κεφαλὴ καὶ νωίτερον λέχος αὐτῶν
> κουρίδιον, τὸ μὲν οὐκ ἄν ἐγώ ποτε μὰψ ὀμόσαιμι.
>
> Let now Earth be witness and wide Heaven above and the down-flowing water of Styx, which is the greatest and most terrible oath to the blessed gods, and your sacred head and our marriage bed, by which I would not rashly swear.

She immediately calls on witnesses, but adding Zeus' own head and their marriage bed to the list is unusual. An act of swearing by Zeus' ἱερὴ κεφαλή cannot be taken lightly. Mortals swear by Zeus, but here the oath seems more personal, a type one would expect from Zeus' wife.[7] Just as personal is their λέχος ... κουρίδιον. In swearing by an object, the object has the force of a

---

an oath-scene is still described. Oaths given completely in narrative are *Il.* 19.127ff, 20.313ff; *Od.* 4.253ff, 14.331ff.

[6]See *Il.* 23.581ff, where Antilochus does *not* respond to Menelaus' Invitation to an oath. A positive response can be seen in Calypso's oath at *Od.* 5.178, where she answers Odysseus' request for an oath by giving a Call To Witness. Achilles does the same at *Il.* 1.86.

[7]Hirzel (33 n.2) points out the formulaic quality of this oath, with special reference to *Il.* 15.38. Yet Leaf (II 86) contrasts the oath at *Il.* 14 with that at *Il.* 15: the fact that there are no underworld gods invoked in 15 "seems to indicate the want of a more distinctly personal sanction" than Styx, even in the case of a god. It is an unarguably personal Invocation. Diskin Clay reminds me that in Homer κεφαλή is also the word for the 'being' or 'life' of a person.

bond, since once it has become part of the action it can confirm and confine the oath taker by its function.[8] The etymological connection between ὅρκος and ἕρκος 'enclosure' proposed by Boisaq and others[9] strengthens the idea of the force of an oath. The enclosure of an oath confines and bonds the participants in it. Luther (86) likens this idea of enclosure to the oath-taker bringing a magic ἕρκος down around himself or herself through a self-curse. Although not a formal Call to Witness, swearing by an object, deity, or cosmic power has the force of calling it to witness (Burkert 251). For example, Achilles swears by a scepter at *Iliad* 1.234. According to Chantraine ὅρκος means "the object by which one swears" as well as "an oath." Hera's Invocation is the only one made by a god in Homer which calls upon something other than a chthonic, earthly, or heavenly power. But their marriage bed is more than an object; it is a symbol of their union. The bed signifies the bond of their marriage, much like Penelope and Odysseus' bed in *Odyssey* 23; a symbol which is very important to Hera and gives more gravity to her proposed oath.

The Tenor of the oath is in lines 41-42: μὴ δι' ἐμὴν ἰότητα Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων/ πημαίνει Τρῶάς τε καὶ Ἕκτορα, τοῖσι δ' ἀρήγει, "not by my will does Poseidon the Earthshaker work against the Trojans and Hector and aid those [Greeks]." In lines 43-44 Hera explains what must be Poseidon's frame of mind, but in fact she gives her own justification for his behavior: ἀλλά που αὐτὸν θυμὸς ἐποτρύνει καὶ ἀνώγει,/ τειρομένους δ' ἐπὶ νηυσὶν ἰδὼν ἐλέησεν Ἀχαιούς. Hera's words are carefully chosen.[10] Μὴ negates only the following words δι' ἐμὴν ἰότητα, not the verb πημαίνει. Hera speaks the truth so far: Poseidon is intervening on his own initiative, since we were not told that Hera sent Hypnos with a message to Poseidon. Rather, he seems to have gone of his own accord.[11]

---

[8]Bollack 11. See also Benveniste 85 and Burkert 251.

[9]Boisaq s.v. ὅρκος. Frisk 418-19 and Hiersche 35-41 support the ὅρκος-ἕρκος relationship. Not as convincing is Leumann's proposal suggesting that ὅρκος corresponds to the Latin **sorcus* or 'branch' (91-92). This theory, however, is strengthened by the oath-scenes which utilize a scepter in their pronouncements.

[10]Another example of her craftiness appears at *Il.* 19.108, where she calls upon Zeus to swear an oath concerning the birth of Heracles. Hera manipulates the results of the oath to the benefit of Eurystheus and the detriment of Heracles.

[11]Leaf (II 83) says that the words of Hera do not become "rank perjury" as long as one ignores the lines added by Scholium T: εἰλαπινάξων: τινὲς ἐπάγουσιν "αὐτὰρ ἐμὴν δὴ νῶϊ κατευνηθέντε{ς} ἴδηαι/ ἀγγεῖλαι τάδε πάντα Ποσειδάωνι ἄνακτι" (Ξ 241 a-b). ψευδὲς δέ ἐστι· οὐ{κ ἄν} γὰρ ἄω ὤμοσεν Ἥρα, (cf. O 41-2), ἀλλ' ὁ Ὕπνος διὰ γάμον τῆς Χάριτος ὑπὲρ τὸ αἰτηθὲν ποιεῖ (Erbse III 619). These lines give instructions for Hypnos to report to Poseidon and were added seemingly in an effort to explain that action.

Burkert (253) says of this scene: "the finer art lies in avoiding direct perjury but nevertheless deceiving one's partner by means of ambiguous and misleading formations..." This type of lying, best illustrated in the lies of Odysseus, has been termed "defensive lying."[12] Autolycus, Odysseus' grandfather, is described as surpassing all men in thievery and the oath (*Od.* 19.395-96), the latter presumably by using ambiguous words. This ambiguity in lying and even swearing may not have been acceptable, but seems to have been recognized as a real possibility. Swearing falsely is presented as an issue in *Iliad* 19.188 when Agamemnon answers Odysseus' Invitation to an oath: οὐδ' ἐπιορκήσω πρὸς δαίμονος.

Aristotle maintains that those who invoke the gods when they swear to observe certain duties in the future and then fail to do so break the oath (βλάψαι τὸν ὅρκον) but do not intentionally swear a false oath.[13] Thus the Trojans in Book 3 of the *Iliad* are not committing perjury: they are oath-breakers, since they failed to perform what they had sworn. Although the Homeric language at *Iliad* 10.332 has Hector swearing a false oath to Dolon (ἐπίορκον ἐπώμοσε), Aristotle and others agree that the intention of the oath-taker is the essential element which decides whether perjury was committed.[14] Homer does not seem to be taking into consideration the intention of a character swearing an oath: a perjurer is the person who swears a false proposition, whether its outcome is beyond his control or not. Hesiod describes the punishment of false oath-swearers and suggests that their intention is an important factor by the using the adverb ἑκὼν 'willingly': ...ὅτε κέν τις ἑκὼν ἐπίορκον ὀμόσσῃ *Th.* 232. More than two centuries later, Herodotus recounts the story of Glaucus, who is told by the oracle at Delphi that the intention to commit perjury is just as bad as actually committing it (6.86). The intention of

[12]To Winkler (135) lying "refers to a policy of systematic and deliberate misdirection...in order to protect oneself in a social environment full of enemies and charged with unremitting suspicion." In an example of aggressive lying, Odysseus tells the young shepherd (Athena) how he murdered a man in Crete for trying to take his booty (*Od.* 13.259-268), a thinly veiled threat. Stanford 36-40 identifies three types of lies: the fictional (told mainly for artistic effect), the benevolent (told with an object of doing good to someone else), and the malevolent (told to bear false witness against someone else). To Stanford divine lies were purely malevolent. For examples of the phenomenon of lying in ancient and modern Greek society, see Walcot 1-19.

[13]Aristotle Fragment 143 (Rose 148) in Bekker V 1502, see also Hirzel 77 n.2. In contrast, those who intentionally swear a false oath, a validating one which relates to past or present fact, are guilty of ἐπιορκία, or perjury. Latte col. 351 and Plescia 13, 84-85 give definitions for promissory and assertory (or validating) oaths. It must be remembered, though, that all the distinctions between types of oaths were made by later authors.

[14]Cleanthus and Chrysippus; see Hirzel 75-78 and Latte coll. 351-2. Therefore, we can view Hector as an oath-breaker but not a perjurer.

the oath-taker is also a consideration in the famous statement by Hippolytus in Euripides: "my tongue swore, but my mind is unsworn" (*Hipp.* 612).[15] Euripides' Agamemnon argues that the gods knew how to discern whether an oath had been sworn wrongly or coerced (*IA* 394a-395).

The type of equivocal statements that we see Hera and Hermes practicing appears elsewhere. Herodotus tells how Themiston avoided perjury and murder by throwing a young woman into the sea as her father had bid him, but hauling her back by a rope he had attached to her (4.154). Thucydides' grim assessment of the change in meanings of words and the meaningless of promises and oaths in times of war (3.82-84) is a precursor to the accusations made common by orators that their adversaries are falsely swearing. The idea that the Greeks viewed the oath as a contract between the parties involved lends itself to the further step of cleverly wording the oath-formula in order to ward off divine punishment.[16]

Oaths carry with them a spoken or unspoken curse on the person falsely swearing. Calling upon the gods as witnesses gives them a dual role: they witness the oath-taking and also act as protectors of the oath, and even punishers of the transgressor. In the sacrifice/oath-scene of *Iliad* 3 Agamemnon calls upon (among others) those in the underworld who punish false oath-takers (278-79). These are probably the Erinyes, who are specifically named in a similar Call to Witness at *Iliad* 19.259-60.[17] Homer (*Il.* 3.301), Herodotus (6.86), and Demosthenes (23.68) all mention the extension of punishment upon the offspring of the perjurer.

Is there a double standard for mortals and gods? Zeus and his fellow gods lie without scruple. The only hope of getting the truth out of a god was to make him swear the inviolable Stygian oath as described in Hesiod. Indeed, it would be in a god's best interest to avoid perjury at all costs. According to Hesiod, gods make a libation with the water of Styx (*Th.* 793), so that in effect they are making contact with the goddess, who can then convict a god making a false declaration (West 374). Whenever anyone of the Olympians lies, Zeus

---

[15]Of course, this line represents the conflict between inner truth and outer appearances, and Hippolytus fulfills his original promise to keep his word about the Nurse's confidence; see Avery 19-35, and for a discussion of the relationship between curse and oath, Segal 165-180.

[16]The connection of bargaining and contracts to oaths was most recently suggested by Plescia 86, who also provided many of the examples of oaths in other authors.

[17]Burkert 197-98, who says that lines 278-79 do not presuppose a judgment of the dead; rather, the Erinyes are an embodiment of the self-curse that the oath contains. Fontenrose 25 and Burkert 197, 252 have the Erinyes punishing oath-breakers after death. Kirk (1985: 305) portrays the Furies as dwelling in the earth but punishing mortals directly on the earth and when still alive, as in Aeschylus.

sends Iris to fetch the θεῶν μέγαν ὅρκον, the famous "cold water" (*Th.* 783-786). Once a god pours out the libation and then perjures himself (ἐπίορκον ... ἐπομόσσῃ), he remains breathless for a year and for the next nine years is exiled from the councils and feasts of the gods (*Th.* 793-803)—reason enough to avoid swearing an oath that is untrue.[18] In light of this supposed punishment Homer's audience would be interested in Zeus' response to Hera.

Hera, however, continues talking and gives no indication of a formal Execution for the oath, which would include a form of ὄμνυμι and κελεύω. Nor do we see a formal Conclusion, which would contain a form of ὄμνυμι as well as a form of τελέω with ὅρκος as direct object. Rather, Hera interrupts her own oath and attempts to flatter Zeus by telling him that she would advise Poseidon to obey Zeus' commands (45-46). This bit of cajolery seems to soften Zeus' anger. In narrative we see ὣς φάτο (47), but none of the vocabulary which signals that an oath was sworn follows it. The omission of the Execution and Conclusion is a reflection of her wish to avoid swearing to something that is not true. In fact, she has offered the oath but not sworn it. That Hera did not swear the oath was not considered when Aristarchus, Leaf, Whitman and Scodel, and others called her oath fraudulent.[19]

Homer has his audience watching this scene with considerable suspense. We know that Hera is on the verge of swearing a false oath, and we wonder what Zeus' reaction will be. Will he accept Hera's protestations and grandiose Call to Witness as an oath? Will he be angry with her and punish her seeming perfidy? The irony is in Zeus' reaction: μείδησεν! The deviation in this scene reflects the success of Hera: Zeus' anger at her is deflected, and he asks her to prove the truth of her words by going to the gods and summoning Iris and Apollo (53-55). The use of ἐτεόν (53) is Homer's emphasis (and Zeus' recognition) of Hera's unwillingness to conclude formally the oath and thereby swear falsely.[20]

---

[18]Hirzel 181 suggests that the year-long coma proves the perjury; the nine year ordeal is the punishment.

[19]Aristarchus: παρακέκρουσται τὸν ὅρκον (Erbse IV 16) and Leaf II 108. I have to differ with Whitman and Scodel 12 over their description of this oath-scene between Zeus and Hera. They, along with Leaf and Burkert, believe that Hera actually swore this oath, whatever ambiguities the wording conceals. Hera did not in fact swear, but this assertion in no way weakens Whitman and Scodel's interpretation of Poseidon's intervention.

[20]If Zeus pressed Hera to take the oath, we no doubt would have ended up with a scene like that at *Il.* 23.581ff, where Antilochus refuses to take an oath that Menelaus presses on him. This oath-scene is even more obvious in its lack of swearing: the Execution and Conclusion are missing, since Antilochus was not willing to perjure himself.

The *Hymn to Hermes* contains similar scenes. Hermes offers an oath to both Apollo (*h.Merc.* 274-76) and Zeus (*h.Merc.* 383-84) that he is not guilty of the theft of Apollo's cattle.

> εἰ δὲ θέλεις πατρὸς κεφαλὴν μέγαν ὅρκον ὀμοῦμαι·
> μὴ μὲν ἐγὼ μήτ' αὐτὸς ὑπίσχομαι αἴτιος εἶναι, 275
> μήτε τιν' ἄλλον ὅπωπα βοῶν κλοπὸν ὑμετεράων,
> αἵ τινες αἱ βόες εἰσί·
>
> But if you wish I will swear a great oath by the head
> of my father and I promise that neither am I myself guilty
> nor have I seen any other thief of your cows,
> whatever cows are.
>
> οἶσθα καὶ αὐτὸς
> ὡς οὐκ αἴτιός εἰμι· μέγαν δ' †ἐπιδώσομαι ὅρκον· 383
> οὐ μὰ τάδ' ἀθανάτων εὐκόσμητα προθύραια.
>
> and you yourself know
> that I am not guilty. But I will swear a great oath;
> no, by these richly decorated porticoes of the gods.

In both instances Hermes uses the future (ὀμοῦμαι 274 and ἐπιδώσομαι 383),[21] making it even more obvious that the oath is not sworn. The first instance begins with an Introduction in which he offers an oath to Apollo that he intends to secure by swearing on his father's head (274). This reference reminds us of Hera's offered oath at *Iliad* 15 (especially κεφαλή, 39) and hints at Hermes' hidden agenda: to gain access to Olympus and cause Zeus to acknowledge him as his son (Clay 134). Hermes then states the Tenor, that he was not guilty of the theft himself, nor does he know any other person who stole the cows (275-76).

In the appearance before Zeus, where Apollo and Hermes argue their dispute, Hermes again offers to swear in the Introduction to this oath-scene (383). His Tenor appears first (383). He calls upon the richly decorated

[21] ἐπιδώσομαι is a conjecture by Barnes. Allen 291 objects to this form on the grounds of a bad parallel (*Il.* 22.254) and that such a familiar form would be able to be changed to ἐπιδέομαι. He suggests that the original was the typical formula μέγαν δ' ἐπὶ ὅρκον ὀμοῦμαι, then the ὅρκον was omitted and added at the end (so δ' ἐπὶ ὀμοῦμαι ὅρκον), finally yielding δεπιομοῦμαι, which was weakened to δεπιδέομαι or δαίομαι. Either way, a future tense is clearly in order.

porticoes of the gods as witness, especially appropriate, as Clay points out, for the young god seeking to penetrate them (384).[22]

The focus has always been on Hermes' wording in each oath-scene. "The wily god has chosen his words carefully; neither here nor later, in the presence of Zeus, does he actually perjure himself; he never drove the cows through the door" (Clay 134). Baumeister (229) and Gemoll (236) have pointed out the discrepancy in his words to Zeus: he drove the cows into the cave (not his house) and he slipped in and out through the keyhole (so he did not cross the threshold). Allen and Sikes (176) maintain that Hermes perjured himself freely in front of Apollo, but chose words that were literally true when he argued his case before Zeus. Sowa (172) bluntly states that the two oaths (lines 274 and 383) are false.

In fact, Hermes has not sworn an oath either time; he has only offered it. I am not arguing that Hermes be deprived of his due: his words at lines 377-382 are clever, and his defense before Zeus reflects his well-deserved reputation as the god of thieves. Moreover, his ambiguity rivals that of Hera in *Iliad* 15. Nevertheless, although he *offers* an oath at lines 274 and 383, at no time does he actually swear it. The first argument in favor of this interpretation is the use of the future tense in both instances: ὀμοῦμαι (274) and ἐπιδώσομαι (383). The future suggests the offering and not actual swearing of an oath. Six oath-scenes in Homer involve the offering of an oath, and only one of them is in fact sworn.[23] The use of a future form (ὀμοῦμαι or another verb) is the usual signal for these offers of an oath.

In addition, from what we have seen of a typical oath-scene, these offered oaths are not sworn. As discussed earlier, for an oath to be considered sworn, it must have an Execution and/or Conclusion. In each offered oath the Introduction and Tenor elements are discernible (though the Tenor at 379-80 comes first), and at line 384, Hermes gives a Call to Witness. An audience familiar with the oath-scenes of Homer has every reason to expect an Execution and/or Conclusion, and attention is drawn to their absence.

Finally, the parallels of these two oath-scenes in the *Hymn to Hermes* with the oath offered by Hera at *Iliad* 15 must be mentioned. Hera and Hermes both rely on their own craftiness to deliver them from a difficult situation. We have

---

[22]Clay 136 n.129. See also Allen, Halliday, and Sikes 328: "The oath 'by the splendid porticoes' seems parodic. He intended to live there."

[23]*Il.* 1.233, 15.36, 21.373; *Od.* 14.151, 19.302, 20.229. Achilles offers an oath at *Il.* 1.233 to no one person in particular. Despite the lack of formal Execution and Conclusion, his act of throwing down the scepter carries out the oath (*Il.* 1.245-6), and it is concluded by his sitting down (*Il.* 1.246). See Callaway 73-75 for a discussion of this scene.

already examined the carefully chosen words each god uses and may justifiably accuse them of lying. Yet Hermes and Hera merely offer oaths, and none of these oath-scenes is completed with Execution or Conclusion elements, thus negating any force the offers had. Furthermore, the similarity of Zeus' reaction to both the oaths offered to him is striking and serves to characterize both oath-offerers: he laughed (μείδησεν *Il.* 15.47 and μέγ' ἐξεγέλασσεν *h.Merc.* 389). Here then is the summation of the attitude towards lying and even perjury among the gods. Lying was acceptable, and the more cleverly done the more it was admired. Perjury, however, was severely punished.[24]

This article has established the fact that neither Hera nor Hermes was guilty of perjury. In order to strengthen their lies, they each offered to swear an oath but did not in fact swear it. The impact of the offer and the lies themselves is stated directly in the reactions of Zeus and Apollo. Zeus smiles at Hera's attempt to extricate herself from blame (μείδησεν *Il.* 15.47), Apollo laughs at the baby Hermes' lie (γελάσας *h.Merc.* 281), as does Zeus (ἐξεγέλασσεν, 389). It may be that Apollo and Zeus, as the gods with superior status in the situation, can afford to be generous and overlook the lies. It may be that craftiness and ambition, like love, receive their just rewards.

[24]It is surprising, then, when Apollodorus tells us that Zeus swore (ἀπωμόσατο 2.1.3) that he had not been with Io. Perhaps we should consider the rank of the perjurer in this case, or the explanation put forth by Hesiod (fr. 124) that false oaths about sexual activity may be exempt. The fact that Hesiod proposed this solution suggests that unpunished perjury, even by the king of the gods, was as troubling in antiquity as it is now.

Works Cited

Allen, T. W. 1895. "The Text of the Homeric Hymns: II." *JHS* 15: 251-313.

_____, W. R. Halliday, and E. E. Sikes. 1936. *The Homeric Hymns*. Oxford.

_____ and E. E. Sikes. 1904. *The Homeric Hymns*. London.

Arend, W. 1933. *Die Typischen Scenen Bei Homer*. Berlin.

Avery, H. C. 1968. "My Tongue Swore, But My Mind Is Unsworn." *TAPA* 99: 19-35.

Baumeister, A. 1860. *Hymni Homerici*. Leipzig.

Bekker, I. 1870. *Aristotelis Opera*. Berlin.

Benveniste, E. 1948. "L'expression du serment dans la Grèce ancienne." *RHR* 134: 81-94.

Boisaq, E. 1950. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue Grecque,* 4th ed. Heidelberg.

Bollack, J. 1958. "Styx et Serments." *REG* 71: 1-35.

Burkert, W. 1985. *Greek Religion*. trans. J. Raffan. Cambridge, Mass.

Callaway, C. 1990. *The Oath in Epic Poetry*. Dissertation: University of Washington.

Chantraine, P. 1968-77. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue Grecque*. Paris.

Clay, J.S. 1989. *The Politics of Olympus*. Princeton.

Edwards, M. 1987. *Homer: Poet of the* Iliad. Baltimore.

Erbse, H. 1973. *Scholia Graeca in Homeri* Iliadem. Berlin.

Fontenrose, J. 1968. "The Gods Invoked in Epic Oaths." *AJP* 89: 20-38.

Frisk, H. 1954. *Griechische etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Heidelberg.

Gemoll, A. 1886. *Der Homerischen Hymnen*. Leipzig.

Hiersche, R. R. 1958. "Note additionelle relative a l'etymologie d'ὅρκος et d'ὀμνύμι." *REG* 71: 35-41.

Hirzel, R. 1904. *Der Eid*. Leipzig.

Kirk, G. S. 1985. *The* Iliad*: A Commentary, Vol.I*. Cambridge.

_____. 1981. "Some Methodological Pitfalls in the Study of Ancient Greek Sacrifice" in *Le sacrifice dans l'antiquité*, eds. J. Rudhardt and O. Reverdin. Geneva. 41-90.

Latte, K. 1932. "Meineid." *RE* Suppl. 15. 346-357.

Leaf, W. 1900. *The* Iliad, 2nd ed. Amsterdam.

Leumann, M. 1950. *Homerische Wörter*. Basel.

Luther, W. 1954. *Weltansicht und Geistesleben*. Göttigen.

Mülder, D. 1930. "Götteranrufungen in *Ilias* und *Odyssee*." *RM* 79: 7-34.

Plescia, J. 1970. *The Oath and Perjury in Ancient Greece*. Tallahassee, Fla.

Segal, C. 1972. "Curse and Oath in Eurpides' *Hippolytus*." *Ramus* 1: 165-180.

Sowa, C. A. 1984. *Traditional Themes and the Homeric Hymns*. Chicago.

Stanford, W.B. 1950. "Studies in the Characterization of Ulysses III." *Hermathena* 75: 35-48.

Walcot, P. 1977. "Odysseus and the Art of Lying." *Antiquity* 8: 1-19.

West, M. L. 1966. *Hesiod*. Theogony. Oxford.

Whitman, C. and R. Scodel. 1981. "Sequence and Simultaneity in *Iliad* N, Ξ and O." *HSCP* 85: 1-15.

Winkler, J. J. 1990. *The Constraints of Desire*. New York.