

Iliadic fame and the splitting of time

1. ἄ δειλοὶ Δαναῶν ἡγήτορες ἠδὲ μέδοντες | ὥς ἄρ' ἐμέλλετε τῆλε φίλων καὶ πατρίδος αἴης | ἄσειν ἐν Τροίῃ ταχέας κύνας ἀργέτι δημῶ. (XI. 816-8)

Ah, you poor leaders and rulers of the Danaans. So in this way, <I see now [*ar*']>, **you were going** [*emellete*], far from your friends and your fatherland, to glut the swift dogs of Troy with your shining fat.¹

Bakker 2005, 100: 'Such notions as "destiny (future) in the past", however, do not seem to be entirely appropriate for this use of Homeric *mellein*; they imply a temporal, chronological, relationship, whereas what seems to be the central feature is consciousness, present and past, with a crucial difference in knowledge between the two.'

2. ὥς φάτο λισσόμενος μέγα νῆπιος· ἦ γὰρ ἔμελλεν | οἷ αὐτῷ θάνατόν τε κακὸν καὶ κῆρα λιτέσθαι. (XVI. 46-7)

So he spoke pleading, **greatly *nēpios***; yes, for he was begging for ugly death and destruction to himself.²

Bakker 2005, 112: '[The character who is *nēpios*] is no more silly or out of touch than other humans. Rather his fundamental condition is that he is out of touch with poetic truth. ... [T]his means that he is explicitly presented as *not in the future*, and since he is not in the future, *he is no poet*.'

3. οὐχ ὄραάς οἶος καγὰ καλός τε μέγας τε; | πατρὸς δ' εἴμ' ἀγαθοῖο, θεὰ δέ με γείνατο μήτηρ· | ἀλλ' ἐπι τοι καὶ ἐμοὶ θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή· | ἔσσειται ἦ ἤως ἢ δειλῆ ἢ μέσον ἦμαρ | ὀππότε τις καὶ ἐμεῖο Ἄρη ἐκ θυμὸν ἔληται | ἦ ὅ γε δουρὶ βαλὼν ἢ ἀπὸ νευρῆφι οἴστω. (XXI. 108-13)

Do you not see what a man I am, how huge, how splendid and born of a great father, and the mother who bore me immortal? Yet even I have also my death and my strong destiny, and there shall be a dawn or an afternoon or a noontime when some man in the fighting will take the life from me also either with a spearcast or an arrow flown from the bowstring.³

SUPPLEMENTARY PASSAGES

- a. καὶ ποτέ τις εἵπησι καὶ ὀψιγόνων ἀνθρώπων | νηὶ πολυκλήιδι πλέων ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον· | ἀνδρὸς μὲν τόδε σῆμα πάλαι κατατεθνηῶτος, | ὅν ποτ' ἀριστεύοντα κατέκτανε φαίδιμος Ἴκτωρ. | ὥς ποτέ τις ἐρέει· τὸ δ' ἐμὸν κλέος οὐ ποτ' ὀλεῖται. (VII. 87-91)

¹ Quoted from Bakker 2005, *Pointing at the Past*: 99-100 in his translation.

² Bakker's translation.

³ Lattimore translations from here on.

And some day one of the lateborn men will say, sailing in his benched ship on the wine-blue water: “This is the mound of a man who died long ago, one of the bravest, and glorious Hektor killed him.” So will he speak some day, and my glory will never perish.

- b. αἰσχρὸν γὰρ τόδε γ’ ἐστὶ καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι | μὰψ οὔτω τοιόνδε τοσόνδε τε λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν | ἄπρηκτον πόλεμον πολεμίζειν ἠδὲ μάχεσθαι. (II. 119-21)

And this shall be a thing of shame for the men hereafter [ἐσσομένοισι] to be told, that so strong, so great a host of Achaians carried on and fought in vain a war that was useless.

- c. φίλε κασίγνητε θάνατόν νύ τοι ὄρκι’ ἔταμνον | οἶον προστήσας πρὸ Ἀχαιῶν Τρωσὶ μάχεσθαι, | ὥς σ’ ἔβαλον Τρῶες, κατὰ δ’ ὄρκια πιστὰ πάτησαν. (IV. 155-7)

Dear brother, it was your death I sealed in the oaths of friendship, setting you alone before the Achaians to fight with the Trojans. So, the Trojans have struck you down and trampled on the oaths sworn.

- d. τοὺς δὲ κατὰ πρύμνας τε καὶ ἀμφ’ ἄλα ἔλσαι Ἀχαιοὺς | κτεινομένους, ἵνα πάντες ἐπαύρωνται βασιλῆος, | γνῶ δὲ καὶ Ἀτρεΐδης εὐρὺ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων | ἦν ἄτην ὅτ’ ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισεν.⁴ (I. 409-12)

Pin the Achaians back against the ships and the water, dying, so that thus they may all have profit of their own king, that Atreus’ son wide-ruling Agamemnon may recognize his madness, that he **did no honour** to the best of the Achaians.

ἀλλὰ σὺ πέρ μιν τῖσον Ὀλύμπιε μητίετα Ζεῦ· | τόφρα δ’ ἐπὶ Τρώεσσι τίθει κράτος ὄφρ’ ἂν Ἀχαιοὶ | υἷὸν ἐμὸν τίσωσιν ὀφέλλωσίν τέ ἐ τιμῇ. (I. 508-10)

Zeus of the counsels, lord of Olympos, now **do him honour**. So long put strength into the Trojans, until the Achaians **give my son his rights**, and **his honour is increased among them**.

... τί νύ σ’ ἔτρεφον αἰνὰ τεκοῦσα; | αἴθ’ ὄφελες παρὰ νηυσὶν ἀδάκρυτος καὶ ἀπήμων | ἦσθαι, ἐπεὶ νύ τοι αἶσα μίνυθ’ ἀπερ οὔ τι μάλα δῆν· | νῦν δ’ ἅμα τ’ ὠκύμορος καὶ οἰζυρὸς περὶ πάντων | ἔπλεο· τῷ σε κακῇ αἴσῃ τέκον ἐν μεγάροισι. (I. 414-8)

How bitterly I gave birth to you and raised you? If only you could sit by your ships untroubled, not weeping, since indeed your lifetime is to be short, of no length. Now it has befallen that your life must be brief and bitter beyond all men’s. To a bad destiny I bore you in my chambers.

- e. μήτηρ γὰρ τέ μέ φησι θεὰ Θέτις ἀργυρόπεζα | διχθαδίας κῆρας φερέμεν θανάτοιο τέλος δέ. | εἰ μὲν κ’ αἴθι μένων Τρώων πόλιν ἀμφιμάχωμαι, | ὄλετο μὲν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄφθιτον

⁴ Both τίνω and τιμή are connected etymologically through the PIE *k^wei-, but see also the collocation in the next quotation.

ἔσται· | εἰ δέ κεν οἴκαδ' ἴκωμι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν, | ἄλετό μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν, ἐπὶ δηρὸν δέ μοι αἰὼν | ἔσσεται, οὐδέ κέ μ' ὤκα τέλος θανάτοιο κιχεΐη. (IX. 410-6)

For my mother Thetis the goddess of the silver feet tells me I carry two sorts of destiny toward the day of my death. Either, if I stay here and fight beside the city of the Trojans, my return home is gone, but my glory shall be everlasting; but if I return home to the beloved land of my fathers, the excellence of my glory is gone, but there will be a long life left for me, and my end in death will not come to me quickly.

- f. οἴσω ἐπὶ Ζεὺς θῆκε κακὸν μόρον, ὡς καὶ ὀπίσω | ἀνθρώποισι πελώμεθ' ἀοιδίμοι ἐσσομένοισι. (VI. 357-8)

Zeus set a vile destiny upon us so that hereafter we shall be made into things of song for the men of the future.⁵

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⁵ A parallel sentiment is expressed in the *Odyssey* (viii. 579-80): "The gods did this, and spun the destruction of peoples, so that there would be a song for those to come" (τὸν δὲ θεοὶ μὲν τεύξαν, ἐπεκλώσαντο δ' ὄλεθρον | ἀνθρώποις, ἵνα ᾗσι καὶ ἐσσομένοισι αἰοιδῆ).

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