Contents

List of illustrations *page* viii
Preface ix

Introduction 1
1 The sighted Muse 14
2 Envisioning Troy 38
3 Homer's Trojan theater 96

Works cited 120
Index locorum 132
Subject index 135

Illustrations

1 The *Teichomachy* by W. Andrae from C. Schuchhardt, "Die Befestigung des achäischen Schiffslagers vor Troja," in *Festschrift zur Vierhundertjahrfeier des alten Gymnasiums zu Bremen 1528–1928* (Bremen, 1928) 422–33 — *page* 46

2 Plan of Trojan battlefield from B. Mannsperger, "Das Stadtbild von Troia in der Ilias," in *Troia: Traum und Wirklichkeit* (Darmstadt, 2001) 81, with inverted orientation (see Fig. 4) and with labels translated from the German by K. A. Dylla — 47

3 The Greek camp, by K. A. Dylla — 50

4 Revised overview of Trojan battlefield, based on Mannsperger (Fig. 2 above), with corrected orientation and added details by K. A. Dylla — 104

Preface

When the definitive work on the tedium of great art is written, it will doubtless devote lengthy chapters to *The Fairy Queen*, *Paradise Regained*, *La nouvelle Héloïse*, *Wilhelm Meister*, *I promessi sposi*, and Balzac's fifty-page description of a card game played in only one area of Normandy – readers will each have their favorite candidates for inclusion. But, for many, a shoo-in for a substantial entry would be the *Iliad*'s Catalogue of Ships and especially the so-called Battle Books, by which I mainly mean Books 12–15. To be sure, the narrative is relieved by rousing speeches, especially the heroic exhortation of Sarpedon, the sometimes stunning similes, and the often touching "obituaries" of fallen warriors, not to speak of the high comedy of Zeus's seduction by Hera. Nevertheless, I am aware (as are my editors) of the dangers that lie in wait for someone who focuses on those very descriptions of combat that so many find tedious. But for those willing to soldier on with me, I hope that they will find themselves rewarded by a clearer understanding of the *Iliad*'s narrative – even the apparent *longueurs* – and an appreciation of the epic's construction and the poem's techniques of communication. Ultimately, I invite my readers to re-experience the ancient war between the Greeks and the Trojans, joining the poet and his audience in a shared imaginative vision.

This project is so different from anything else I have done that it required many confidence-building measures from my friends and colleagues to help me see it through. Now is the pleasurable moment for thanking all those who gave me valuable comments and encouragement along the way. Merely listing them is insufficient but will have to suffice: Paul Barolsky, Diskin Clay, John Dillery, Ted Lendon, David Mankin, Elizabeth Minchin, Pavlos Sfyroeras, Anna

Stelow, and Ester Zago, the last of whom provided the translation from Calvino. Special thanks go to Tobias Myers for his care and acumen in reading the manuscript. The birthplace of this project was the *fienile* of Gioachino Chiarini and Gavina Cerchi; its public debut came in my Presidential Address to the American Philological Association. The University of Virginia's Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities and Ben Jasnow, graduate student in the Department of Classics, who also read the text with care, translated the pictures in my head onto the internet. Kim Dylla patiently helped me with the illustrations. I encourage my readers to look at the website (www.homerstrojantheater.org/), which continues to evolve, and I would be grateful for their comments and suggestions for improvements. Michael Sharp of Cambridge University Press saw some merit in this project; both his and the anonymous readers' comments improved the final results, and Jan Chapman showed patience and forbearance during copy-editing. With his sagacious nose, L. T. Brown has left his mark on every page and he is to blame for all faux pas and flaws in the ointment. Roger Breed Stein, my companion of many years, was patience personified especially at moments when my confidence flagged, and his eagle eye never let a misplaced apostrophe escape. He succumbed to a grave illness which he bore with his characteristic courage and equanimity as this study was going to press. I dedicate it to his memory; may it be a blessing.

Introduction

Ille levi virga (virgam nam forte tenebat),
  Quod rogat, in spisso litore pingit opus.
"Haec" inquit "Troia est" (muros in litore fecit),
  "Hic tibi sit Simois; haec mea castra puta.
Campus erat" (campumque facit), "quem caede Dolonis
  Sparsimus, Haemonios dum vigil optat equos.
Illic Sithonii fuerant tentoria Rhesi;
  Hac ego sum captis nocte revectus equis –"
Pluraque pingebat, subitus cum Pergama fluctus
  Abstulit et Rhesi cum duce castra suo.

He [Odysseus] with a slender branch (for he happened to have one),
  Draws the plan she [Calypso] requests on the compact sand.
"Here," he said, "is Troy" (he drew walls on the sand),
  "Let this be Simoeis; consider this my camp.
There was the plain" (which he drew), "which we sprinkled
  with Dolon's blood, whose wakeful spying prayed to win Achilles' horses.
There were the tents of Thracian Rhesus;
  But here I am the one who returned with captured horses at night –"
He was drawing more, when suddenly a wave washed away the citadel
  of Pergamus and the camp of Rhesus along with its leader.

(Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 2.131–40)[1]

In those long years with Calypso, Ovid tells us, the goddess kept asking Ulysses – not all that handsome but a smooth talker – to tell the story of the fall of Troy; and he told it over and over (of course emphasizing his own particular exploits), always the same, always

[1] All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

different. Here at her request he re-envisions Troy, sketching its plan from memory and pointing out its landmarks. Even though its outlines are washed away by a passing wave, the mind's eye can reconstruct Ilium's landscape again and again. Mindful of Odysseus' sketchings in the sand, I ask my readers to join me on a tour of Homer's Trojan theater. My intention is to show that Homer's vision of Troy is rational and consistent, that he renders his auditors witnesses to the events he narrates, that the sequence of actions is reactivated in each performance, and that these features are characteristic of Homeric poetics: "for all we know," as one critic notes, "he may have mapped his poetic path in the sand."[2]

My title, *Homer's Trojan Theater*, plays on three meanings of the word "theater." First, there is a theater of war offering a synoptic vision of a military campaign;[3] then, theater as a place for spectators to observe a performance of some kind. Indeed, an old commentator on the *Iliad* described the arrangement of the Greek camp and its ships as "theater-like."[4] Ancient Greek has an extraordinarily rich terminology involving sight;[5] vision, in turn, creates the foundation for knowledge of the world. For the Greek, to see is to know. *Theatron* derives from the verb *theesthai* that signifies a particular kind of seeing, one in which the act of perceiving elicits wonder in the beholder.[6] Such wonder is, above all, produced by beholding something divine. Finally, somewhat anachronistically I am alluding to what was known in the Renaissance as the "theater of memory," a gloriously complex version of the classical mnemonic system of *loci*.[7]

[2] Taplin (1992) 36.

[3] The *OED* cites "The theatre of operations of an army embraces all the territory it may desire to invade and all that it may be necessary to defend," from G. H. Mendell's 1879 translation of A. H. Jomini's *Précis de l'art de la guerre*. The British historian R. Samuel subtitled his two-volume work on British history *Theatres of Memory* (1994), and vol. II, 12 mentions John Speed's *The Theater of the Empire of Great Britain* (1611), calling it "a fundamental work for a century and more of cartography."

[4] θεατροειδής: Aristonicus at Σ 11.807 and 14.35.

[5] See Mugler (1964); and Prévot (1935) 133–60, 233–79.

[6] Cf. Prier (1989) 81–84. See also Mette (1960) 49–71, and the provocative observations of Dillery (2004) 239–52 and (2008) 243–63.

[7] See Yates (1966), esp. 129–59. Other important studies of the mnemonic tradition: Carruthers and Ziolkowski (2002); and Bolzoni (1995). A Jesuit missionary, Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), brought the art to China; see Lackner (1986); and Spence (1984). *The Washington Post* (Jan. 5, 2005) mentioned that Andrew Card, George W. Bush's Chief of Staff, used the

The prominence of seeing and observing, the frequent references to spectators or observers of the action, whether divine or mortal are, as has long been noted, characteristic of the *Iliad*.[8] The presence of spectators, whether gods or human beings, whether distant or in the thick of the action, whether passionately involved or impartial, encourages us to see ourselves as viewers. In various ways, these internal observers model the perspectives and reactions of the external audience.[9] The particular standpoint of the internal spectators defines their relation to the action; what they observe is the landscape of Troy, a setting defined by landmarks, both geographic and symbolic, on which the *Iliad*'s drama is played out. The gods' panoramic viewing has the capacity to take it all in at once without a specific orientation, but at times they may adopt the perspective of the human observers, positioning themselves at the Achaean camp arrayed along the beach, or on the walls and towers of Troy. The divine audience may become passionately involved with the fate of a mortal or may contemplate the Trojan theater more dispassionately or even as entertainment.[10] Disconcerting to us is the image of Apollo and Athena in the guise of vultures impassively enjoying the spectacle of the ranks of the Greeks and Trojans resplendent in their armor (7.58–62):

> κὰδ δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ Ἀθηναίη τε καὶ ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων
> ἑζέσθην ὄρνισιν ἐοικότες αἰγυπιοῖσι
> φηγῷ ἐφ᾽ ὑψηλῇ πατρὸς Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,
> ἀνδράσι τερπόμενοι· τῶν δὲ στίχες ἥατο πυκναί,
> ἀσπίσι καὶ κορύθεσσι καὶ ἔγχεσι πεφρικυῖαι.

> Athena and Apollo of the silver bow sat down
> In the semblance of birds, vultures,
> Upon a lofty oak of their father, Zeus who holds the aegis,
> Taking their pleasure in men, whose ranks sat close arrayed,
> Bristling with shields and helmets and spears.

Ricci system. On the ancient tradition, see Blum (1969). In his book commemorating the 250th anniversary of the founding of the British Museum, *Museum of the Mind* (2003), J. Mack calls the modern encyclopedic museum a visual memory theater of human history. The word "museum," of course, brings us back full circle to the Muses and their mother, Mnemosyne.

[8] See most recently, Slatkin (2007) 19–34.

[9] For the importance of focalization in the *Iliad*, see de Jong (1987) and S. Richardson (1990).

[10] See Griffin (1980) 179–204.

Even more unnerving is Zeus's sweeping gaze from the peak of Ida, far above the tumult of combat, that heralds the opening of the great day of battle (11.81–83):

> τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάνευθε καθέζετο κύδεϊ γαίων,
> εἰσορόων Τρώων τε πόλιν καὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν
> χαλκοῦ τε στεροπήν, ὀλλύντας τ' ὀλλυμένους τε.

> Apart from the others, he sat rejoicing in his supreme glory,
> Gazing at the city of the Trojans and the ships of the Achaeans
> And the flash of bronze, the slayers and the slain.

From their respective grandstands, the gods may cheer on their favorites or fear for their safety, but the impartial Muses stand by to record the proceedings for posterity. Their gaze allows us take in a bird's-eye view or zero in to focus on the precise path of a fateful arrow as it pierces the white thigh of Menelaus in slow motion (4.132–40) or a disemboweling thrust of a spear.

More often than not, Zeus's observation moves him to pity for the human actors; occasionally, too, it arouses his indignation; at other times he seems to admire the spectacle with an almost aesthetic detachment. But the gaze of wide-seeing Zeus also has the ability to control events. Thus Zeus transports himself from Olympus to make his headquarters on Ida not only to get a closer look at the battlefield, but also to take charge of it (8.41–52). In accordance with the ancient notion that the eyes not only receive but also emit light, the Olympian literally radiates a gaze that controls.[11] When at the beginning of Book 13 he turns his radiant eyes away, the tide of battle reverses, for Poseidon has been watching on the peak of Samothrace, from which he commands a panoramic view whose trajectory zooms in from the most distant to the nearer (13.13–14):

> ἔνθεν γὰρ ἐφαίνετο πᾶσα μὲν Ἴδη,
> φαίνετο δὲ Πριάμοιο πόλις καὶ νῆες Ἀχαιῶν.

> From there all of Ida was visible,
> As was the city of Priam and the ships of the Achaeans.

Later from Olympus Hera's gaze encompasses both gods, again moving from the nearer to the farther (14.153–58):

[11] Cf. 19.16–17, where Achilles' eyes radiate like a beam of light as he looks upon the divine armor Thetis has brought. For discussion and further examples, see Mugler (1960) 40–73.

> Ἥρη δ' εἰσεῖδε χρυσόθρονος ὀφθαλμοῖσι
> στᾶσ' ἐξ Οὐλύμποιο ἀπὸ ῥίου· αὐτίκα δ' ἔγνω
> τὸν μὲν ποιπνύοντα μάχην ἀνὰ κυδιάνειραν
> αὐτοκασίγνητον καὶ δαέρα, χαῖρε δὲ θυμῷ·
> Ζῆνα δ' ἐπ' ἀκροτάτης κορυφῆς πολυπίδακος Ἴδης
> ἥμενον εἰσεῖδε, στυγερὸς δέ οἱ ἔπλετο θυμῷ.

> Hera of the golden throne observed with her eyes
> Standing on the summit of Olympus; straightway she recognized
> The one [Poseidon] busying himself in the battle that glorifies men,
> Her own brother and brother-in-law, and she rejoiced in her heart;
> But Zeus on the topmost peak of Ida with its many springs
> She observed as he sat, and loathing filled her heart.

In a scene that presents the entire Trojan plain as a kind of arena, the divine supporters of the Greeks take their seats opposite the gods on the side of the Trojans (20.144–52). Thus arrayed, they watch Achilles' *aristeia* and his elemental battle with the Scamander. The gods as spectators figure most notoriously in Book 22 when Achilles chases Hector around the walls of Troy (22.157–66):

> τῇ ῥα παραδραμέτην, φεύγων, ὁ δ' ὄπισθε διώκων·
> πρόσθε μὲν ἐσθλὸς ἔφευγε, δίωκε δέ μιν μέγ' ἀμείνων
> καρπαλίμως, ἐπεὶ οὐχ ἱερήϊον οὐδὲ βοείην
> ἀρνύσθην, ἅ τε ποσσὶν ἀέθλια γίγνεται ἀνδρῶν,
> ἀλλὰ περὶ ψυχῆς θέον Ἕκτορος ἱπποδάμοιο.
> ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἀεθλοφόροι περὶ τέρματα μώνυχες ἵπποι
> ῥίμφα μάλα τρωχῶσι· τὸ δὲ μέγα κεῖται ἄεθλον,
> ἢ τρίπος ἠὲ γυνὴ ἀνδρὸς κατατεθνηῶτος·
> ὣς τὼ τρὶς Πριάμοιο πόλιν πέρι δινηθήτην
> καρπαλίμοισι πόδεσσι· θεοὶ δ' ἐς πάντες ὁρῶντο.

> The two of them ran past – the one fleeing, the other in pursuit;
> Excellent was the man in flight in front, but his pursuer was far better –
> Quickly, for they were not contending for a victim or an ox-hide,
> Which are the prizes for racing among men,
> But they ran for the life of horse-taming Hector.
> As when prize-winning hoofed horses run
> About the turning post with all speed; and a great prize
> Is set out, either a tripod or a woman, in honor of a man who has died;
> So did the two whirl thrice around Priam's city
> With their swift feet, and all the gods looked on.

Again, the equation whereby gods are to warfare as mortals are to sports has something chilling about it. Watching such deadly

combat serves as divine entertainment, just as their hearing accounts of mortal suffering performed by divine singers diverts the gods on Olympus.[12]

To be sure, the funeral games for Patroclus, however hotly contested, do not end in bloodshed, but the human spectators, like their divine counterparts, take sides, marvel, laugh, pick quarrels, and even feel pity. The forces that determine victory or defeat on the battlefield are just as present in these non-lethal contests. Here I focus on the human spectators and on what the ancient commentators emphasize in Homer's description of these athletic contests: "He [the poet] has set forth the whole imaginative representation so vividly (*enargōs*) as to render his listeners nothing less than spectators (*theatai*)."[13] The scholia repeatedly draw attention to the role of this internal audience when they misbehave and insult each other ("their abuse is boorish, but it imitates the behavior of spectators") or, on the contrary, when they resemble "the more mature and dignified spectators in our contests now, who do not think it appropriate to anticipate the outcome ahead of time." Pointing out the spectators' displeasure when the wrestling contest goes on too long and remains indecisive, the scholiasts also note that the poet is well aware of the danger of boring his audience.[14]

For the most part, the human observers, the old men, the women, and even the wounded champions, are far from impartial as they watch the progress of the war. Observing fallen comrades motivates warriors to participate in combat, to rescue or avenge. Achilles, however, seems oddly unmoved as he surveys the carnage from his poop deck (cf. 11.600–601, 16.255–56); while from the Trojan ramparts Helen also appears detached, almost transcending the war fought on her account. These two also share the power to translate the war into poetry: Helen with her weaving that depicts "the many struggles of

[12] Cf. *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 188–93. One wonders what the Muses sang to Apollo's accompaniment at the end of *Iliad* 1.

[13] bT Scholia at 23.362: πᾶσαν φαντασίαν ἐναργῶς προβέβληται ὡς μηδὲν ἧττον τῶν θεατῶν ἐσχηκέναι τοὺς ἀκροατάς. See also below on *enargeia* as characteristic of Homer's style.

[14] T at 23.476: ἀγροικώδης μὲν ἡ λοιδορία, ἀλλὰ μιμεῖται διαθέσεις θεατῶν; T at 23.497: τοιοῦτοι καὶ ἐν τοῖς νῦν ἀγῶσί τινες πρεσβυτικοὶ καὶ εὐσταθεῖς θεαταί, μηδὲν πρὸ τοῦ καιροῦ προλαμβάνειν ἀξιοῦντες; and bT at 23.721: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀηδέστερον θεαταῖς ἐστιν ἢ παλαισταὶ δι' ὅλης τῆς ἡμέρας ἐφαμίλλως ἰσορροποῦντες.

the horse-taming Trojans and the bronze-clad Achaeans who suffered on her account at the hands of Ares" (3.125–28); and Achilles, who whiles away the time in his camp singing heroic rhapsodies rather than providing material for them. (9.186–89).

Remarkably, even within Homeric similes, which by their nature invite us to view two images and compare them, the poet often includes an internal observer who directs our response to the scenes evoked.[15] An example, from the end of Book 8, describes a unique moment in the Trojans' fortunes, buoyed up by Zeus's intervention and no longer cooped up behind their walls. Before the great day of battle that dawns at the beginning of Book 11 and only ends as night finally falls in Book 18, the victorious Trojans have pushed the Greeks back and dare to bivouac out on the plain in front of their city (8.553–61):

οἳ δὲ μέγα φρονέοντες ἐπὶ πτολέμοιο γεφύρας
ἥατο παννύχιοι, πυρὰ δέ σφισι καίετο πολλά.
ὡς δ᾽ ὅτ᾽ ἐν οὐρανῷ ἄστρα φαεινὴν ἀμφὶ σελήνην
φαίνετ᾽ ἀριπρεπέα, ὅτε τ᾽ ἔπλετο νήνεμος αἰθήρ·
ἔκ τ᾽ ἔφανεν πᾶσαι σκοπιαὶ καὶ πρώονες ἄκροι
καὶ νάπαι· οὐρανόθεν δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ὑπερράγη ἄσπετος αἰθήρ,
πάντα δὲ εἴδεται ἄστρα, γέγηθε δέ τε φρένα ποιμήν·
τόσσα μεσηγὺ νεῶν ἠδὲ Ξάνθοιο ῥοάων
Τρώων καιόντων πυρὰ φαίνετο Ἰλιόθι πρό.

And they, with their great expectations, on the causeways of war,
Sat all night long, and many were their watch fires.
As when in the heaven, the stars around the shining moon
Shine splendidly when the pure air is windless,
And all the lookouts and beetling cliffs shine forth
And all the glens; and from heaven the bright aether is rent
And all the stars become visible, and the heart of the shepherd rejoices:
So great were the numbers between the ships and the streams of Xanthus
Of the Trojan watch fires burning before Ilium.

This high point of the Trojans' fortunes is made visible in this splendid simile that is itself freighted with an abundance of terms involving bright light, and shimmering vision; and the joyful reaction of the shepherd is surely an expression of the Trojans' triumphal mood at

[15] Cf. 3.10–11, 4.275–80, 13.492–93, and *Od.* 6.102–106.

their strategic advance. At 10.13, moreover, we learn that they are sufficiently self-assured to be playing music in their bivouac, an overt sign of their ease and self-confidence. But the pleasure of the internal observer also invites the audience to be entranced by the sheer beauty of the scene and to share momentarily a divine perspective, viewing the Trojan watch fires from afar, where a transient human moment is mirrored in the eternal cosmic phenomena of the heavens.[16] Like the gods, we the audience can witness this interplay of the ephemeral and the timeless, this conversion of the fleeting into the everlasting, that constitutes the transformative power of poetry transcending both time and space and transforming the visual into the verbal, which in turn allows the mind's eye to re-imagine the initial vision.

Unusual in its focus on human psychology, another simile describing Hera's journey from Ida to Olympus models not only the speed of thought, but the mind's imaginative ability to transport itself through space (15.80–82):

> ὡς δ᾽ ὅτ᾽ ἂν ἀΐξῃ νόος ἀνέρος, ὅς τ᾽ ἐπὶ πολλὴν
> γαῖαν ἐληλουθὼς φρεσὶ πευκαλίμῃσι νοήσῃ,
> "ἔνθ᾽ εἴην ἢ ἔνθα," μενοινήῃσί τε πολλά . . .
>
> As when the mind of a man darts, a man who has traversed
> Many lands, and he thinks in his penetrating mind,
> Desiring to be in many places, "I wish I were here, or here" . . .

In what appears at first an unnecessary detail, the man, Odysseus-like, has traversed many places; his imaginative transport thus, as we shall see, is also a feat of memory, a mental image. Similarly, the mind of the poet can dart across time and space and, despite temporal and spatial distance, can convey his audience to the Trojan plain where his drama unfolds.[17]

Finally, we cannot discuss Homer's poetics of vision without turning our gaze, even if only momentarily, onto the great shield Hephaestus fabricates for Achilles, which becomes the paradigm for all verbal descriptions of works of art and therefore draws us into the

[16] See de Jong (1987) 131–34; and Fränkel (1921) 5–6.

[17] Aristotle, *De anima* 3.3.427b, defines *phantasia* in strikingly similar terms: "For imagining (*phantasia*) lies within our own power whenever we wish (e.g. we can call up a picture, as in the practice of mnemonics by the use of mental images)" (trans. J. B. Smith). Also note *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 174–75 for the wandering poet.

competition between visual and verbal poiesis. I cannot pretend to add to the often brilliant discussions of Homer's most famous object but here make only a few observations. The images on the shield of Achilles closely parallel the epic's similes and are drawn from the same world. Thus it comes as no surprise that there too the figure of the spectator frequently shows up, whether it be the women marveling at the wedding festivities from their doorways (18.495–96), or the throngs of supporters in the trial scene (18.502) in the peaceful city, or the old men, women, and children watching from the walls of a city under siege (18.514–15), or scouts preparing for a cattle-raid (18.523–24). A king in silent satisfaction observes reapers going about their tasks (18.556–57); finally, the shield's most elaborate scene with its intricate detailing of artful dance and song would not be complete without a great crowd of spectators enjoying the sight (18.603–604).

Much has been said about how Homer converts the static icons of the shield into narrative, the transformation from eye to mouth, the movement from timelessness into temporality. What has perhaps received less attention is the prominence of sound, especially song and music, within the silent shield. By inscribing song within a mute object, the poet insists not only on his ability to render images into words – and indeed, words back into images – but he also lays claim to the power of music, and hence his own art, to bring to life and to endow, not just motion, but the rhythmical movement of poetry to Hephaestus' beautiful scenes.

This brings me to an odd simile that punctuates Achilles' long-awaited return to battle at the end of Book 19. The long-delayed arming scene conforms to the usual sequence: first, the greaves, then the breastplate and sword, followed by the shield and finally the spear.[18] The shield, or rather the gleam from the shield is described in a complex simile (19.373–80):

> αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα σάκος μέγα τε στιβαρόν τε
> εἵλετο, τοῦ δ᾽ ἀπάνευθε σέλας γένετ᾽ ἠΰτε μήνης.
> ὡς δ᾽ ὅτ᾽ ἂν ἐκ πόντοιο σέλας ναύτῃσι φανήῃ

[18] See J. I. Armstrong (1958) 337–54, who notes that this type of scene occurs in full only four times in the poem: 3.328–38 (Paris, who has to borrow a breastplate from his brother, Lycaon), 11.15–55 (Agamemnon, whose breastplate and shield are both elaborated in nine lines each), 16.130–54 (Patroclus, who explicitly does not take the Pelian ash spear), and 19.364–424 (Achilles).

καιομένοιο πυρός, τό τε καίεται ὑψόθ᾽ ὄρεσφι
σταθμῷ ἐν οἰοπόλῳ· τοὺς δ᾽ οὐκ ἐθέλοντας ἄελλαι
πόντον ἐπ᾽ ἰχθυόεντα φίλων ἀπάνευθε φέρουσιν·
ὣς ἀπ᾽ Ἀχιλλῆος σάκεος σέλας αἰθέρ᾽ ἵκανε
καλοῦ δαιδαλέου.

Then he took up the shield great and stout;
And from it came a gleam like the moon.
As when a gleam appears to sailors at sea
Of a burning fire that burns high in the mountains
In a solitary sheepfold; but against their will the gusts
Carry them off on the fishy sea, away from their dear ones:
So did the gleam from Achilles' beautifully adorned shield
Reach the aether.

This simile also contains observers, but here they contemplate the distant bonfires of their homeland with longing and pathos as they are helplessly swept away from all they know and love. Although the lines form part of a series of images that associate Achilles with fire,[19] critics have nevertheless long been puzzled by this particular passage. Most identify the sailors with the Greeks who look to Achilles' return as a light of salvation, relieving the hard-pressed Greeks; but such an explanation ignores the emotional valence of the scene.[20] Not safety, but sadness, solitude, and loss characterize the sailors who see the warmth of home and friends and all they hold dear slip from their grasp. We must look beyond the immediate context to understand this nostalgic image.

Epic arming scenes frequently include detailed descriptions of the warrior's shield; in Homer, most elaborately, Agamemnon's; outside Homer, most notoriously in the *Shield of Heracles*. Achilles' shield, however, has already been described at length, not as it is donned for battle, but as it was fabricated by Hephaestus (18.478–613). Our arming scene opens by pointedly alluding to that passage: "He put on the gifts of the god that Hephaestus made and fashioned for him"

[19] For fire in connection with Achilles, see Whitman (1958) 128–53; Moulton (1977) 108; cf. Scott (1974) 115–16.
[20] Fränkel (1921) 49–50. W. H. Friedrich (1982) 126–27 argues that the loss is seen through Hector's eyes, but this seems far-fetched. Compare Nannini (2003) 31.

(19.368). The scenes inscribed upon Achilles' shield by the divine craftsman represented the whole of human experience, but they also revealed that the heroic martial world of the *Iliad* formed only a small part of that whole. Thus the absence of the expected description of the shield leaves an empty space in the arming scene of Book 19, a space that simultaneously evokes it and its mundane images, even as it passes over them in silence. Into that silent space Homer has inscribed our simile. The nocturnal gleam from the shield represents, I would suggest, the human world in all its fullness, a world that includes not just war, but also peace, marriage, the circling seasons of harvesting and plowing, and the elaborate dances of young girls and boys. The bright details of that world and its vivid verbal icon are here compressed into a fiery gleam, distant and longed for; all these are what Achilles abandons as he sets out to kill Hector, fully aware that he will not return. This simile punctuates a critical moment in the poem and is, in my opinion, one of the most powerful in the *Iliad*; it evokes all the facets of ordinary human life outside the poem at the moment that Achilles is about to leave them behind as the *Iliad* hurtles to its tragic conclusion. The passionate observers here stand for the hero himself.

The ancient tradition tells of Homer's blindness, a story doubtless drawn from his depiction of the bard Demodocus at the court of the Phaeacians, whom Odysseus compliments for the verisimilitude and vividness of his narrative of events at Troy. The composer of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* puts his seal on the poem by claiming to be "the blind man who resides in rugged Chios, all of whose songs are hereafter the best" (*Hymn Hom. Apoll.* 172–73). That the most visual of poets should be portrayed as blind may seem at first paradoxical. Yet the blindness of poets and seers in the Greek tradition insists that their vision is not preoccupied with the world around them, but rather that their gaze is focused on the future or the past to the exclusion of the mundane activities that consume our humdrum attention. It is as if such single-minded concentration precludes a focus on the ordinary events of the unfolding present.

One of the ancient *Lives* of Homer recounts a beautiful parable explaining how Homer lost his sight:

They say that he became blind in the following way; when he came to the grave of Achilles, he prayed to behold (*theasasthai*) the hero as he appeared when he went off to battle adorned with the second set of armor. But when he saw Achilles, Homer was blinded by the brightness of the armor. Pitied by Thetis and the Muses, he was honored by them with the gift of poetry.[21]

The stunning vision – literally blinding – of his hero's epiphany henceforth obscures all other sights. The desire to gaze upon – and I emphasize the verb *theasasthai*, "to be a spectator" – Achilles returned from the dead in all his glory deprives the poet of his sight and darkens his vision of his present surroundings so that he can direct his inner vision to the splendors of the heroic past which he invites us to share.

In sum, whether it is the passions of the sports fans in their grandstands, the divine audience, both partisan and impartial at different proximities to the action, or the human actors in the Trojan drama from their various viewing points, all constitute models that incite us to transform ourselves from listeners – or readers – to spectators and to transport ourselves to Homer's Trojan theater.

This study will first review discussions of the centrality of vision in Homeric poetics and its importance to both the poet in constructing, and his audience in comprehending, the course of his narrative. In addition, I will summarize some relevant recent research in cognitive studies involving the critical role of visualization in story telling.[22] But to speak of visualizing narrative action also requires us to consider its temporal dimension; an event may unfold in space, but it also takes place in time. Examining the complex spatial coordinates of Homeric narratives will oblige us to revisit some old questions concerning Homer's treatment of simultaneous events and Zielinski's so-called Law.

Building on this foundation, my study will examine the organization of space in the *Iliad* and its visualization and the relation of topography to narrative action, first by following Hector's itinerary while he traverses the city of Troy in Book 6 as he encounters his mother, Helen and Paris, and finally his wife and infant son. After exploring the urban landscape of Troy, I will turn to the layout of the Achaean camp as it emerges most clearly from the nocturnal encounters of *Iliad* 10. The bulk of my discussion, however, will focus on the contested space between these two arenas of action, the plain of Troy between the Achaean ships and the battlements of Ilium, in the so-called Battle Books, especially Books 12 and 13 when the battlefield is split into two (and occasionally three) theaters of operation; Book 15, by contrast, views the battlefield not over its front, but rather in depth, as the Greeks are steadily pushed back and compressed into an ever shrinking area beside their ships. Books 16 and 17 both have a single focus, in both cases defined by Patroclus; the sixteenth book follows his trajectory from Achilles' camp to the walls of Troy, his retreat, and finally his death, while Book 17 takes the motionless corpse of Patroclus as its focal point around which the action loops. In all these sequences, I contend, the action is conceived in spatial terms; while the pattern of events may differ, they all unfold within a consistent backdrop. Various devices, particularly deictic markers, indicate the deployment of the forces and the layout of the battlefield in a coherent manner. Careful attention to them can resolve several traditional Homeric *zetemata*. Using the *Iliad* as my script, I will attempt to re-envision the activity on the battlefield. Translating the poem's verbal account into a visual medium not only demonstrates the coherence of its plan but also reveals the role of spatial design in plotting its narrative. Finally I will suggest that the poet of the *Iliad* made use of mnemonic techniques that allowed him to master the complexity of the action on the field of battle, to visualize the location of each of his major characters, and to convey to his listeners a clear and vivid picture of his Trojan theater.

[21] *Vita Homeri* 6.45–51 (p. 252 Allen).

[22] I have found the work of Rubin (1995), Minchin (2001a), and Bakker (2005) most helpful in formulating my discussion. Purves' (2010) wide-ranging study appeared too late to be fully integrated into mine. But if I understand her correctly, she argues for a radical break between what she calls the synoptic vision of the epic Muses and a linear or hodological concept, which she links to the emergence of prose. My study demonstrates that both panoramic and hodological modes of viewing are already operative in Homeric epic.

HOMER'S TROJAN THEATER

Space, Vision, and Memory in the Iliad

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In memory of Roger Breed Stein

One had to be versed in country things
Not to believe the phoebes wept.

Robert Frost