

# The “Became Silent to Silence” Formula in Homer

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SCHOLARS WHO CONSIDER Homeric epic as orally-derived are sometimes accused of diminishing its (literary) artistry. This accusation stems from the early emphasis placed upon formulae and themes as compositional units and a corresponding lack of interest in their aesthetic functions. Several recent studies, however, have demonstrated that some formulae function aesthetically, *i.e.*, they communicate far more than simply their semantic meaning and have close relationships with their narrative contexts. John Miles Foley has argued that the formula  $\pi\upsilon\kappa\iota\nu\acute{o}\nu$  ἔπος, “shrewd or wise word,” refers to “a message or communication of great importance, one that if properly delivered and received would change the present course of events profoundly.” James P. Holoka has argued that the formula  $\upsilon\pi\acute{o}\delta\rho\alpha$  ἰδῶν, “looking darkly,” conveys anger on the part of the speaker who takes umbrage at what he judges to be rude or inconsiderate words spoken by the addressee.<sup>1</sup> Both Foley and Holoka then demonstrated how these formulae contribute to the characters’ (and readers’) expectations concerning the following events and speeches. The present study likewise explicates the aesthetic function of one formula ( $\sigma\iota\omega\pi\eta$ , “and all of them became silent to silence”),<sup>2</sup> which occurs sixteen times and functions as the narrator’s bridge from one character’s speech to another’s.

To understand better the aesthetic function of this formula, my study draws from the field of conversation analysis, which has proven useful in describing the aesthetics of various works

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington 1991) 154ff; J. P. Holoka, “‘Looking Darkly’ ( $\Upsilon\pi\acute{o}\delta\rho\alpha$  Ἰδῶν): Reflections on Status and decorum in Homer,” *TAPA* 113 (1983) 1–16.

<sup>2</sup> *Il.* 3.95; 7.92, 398; 8.28; 9.29, 430, 693; 10.218, 313; 23.676; *Od.* 7.154; 8.234; 11.333; 13.1; 16.393; 20.320. Quotations from Homer are from the OCT editions. All English translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

of literature.<sup>3</sup> We shall observe that the semantic level of meaning of the "became silent to silence" formula is closely related to its extra-semantic level of meaning and that both levels of meaning correspond well to the basic observations on the structure of everyday speech. Before analyzing this formula and its context, some introductory remarks are needed to acquaint readers with the terminology and perspectives of this approach.

### Conversation Analysis and Preference Organization

Conversation analysis<sup>4</sup> developed from the field of ethnomethodology, which seeks to understand the 'ethnic' methods (*i.e.*, the participants' own common-sense skills and abilities), which enable participants to produce and recognize meaningful social interaction. Conversation analysis thus shares with ethnomethodology a commitment to naturally occurring interaction and the avoidance of premature, theoretical constructs. Nevertheless, increasing evidence suggests that the basic observations of conversation analysis are not culturally limited, but rather are universal in relation to the basic organization of all language.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> E.g. K. K. Gautam, "Pinter's *The Caretaker*: A Study in Conversational Analysis," *Journal of Pragmatics* 11 (1987) 49-59; R. T. Lakoff and D. Tannen, "Conversational Strategy and Metastrategy in a Pragmatic Theory: The Example of *Scenes from a Marriage*," *Semiotica* 49 (1984) 323-46; R. F. Person, Jr, *In Conversation with Jonah: Conversation Analysis, Literary Criticism, and the Book of Jonah* (Sheffield 1996); D. Tannen, "Silence as Conflict Management in Fiction and Drama: Pinter's *Betrayal* and a Short Story, 'Great Wits'," in A. D. Grimshaw, ed., *Conflict Talk: Sociolinguistic Investigations of Arguments in Conversations* (Cambridge 1990) 260-79; M. Toolan, "Analysing Fictional Dialogue [in Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" and Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain"]," *Language and Communication* 5 (1985) 193-206; K. Wadman, "'Private Ejaculations': Politeness Strategies in George Herbert's Poems Direct to God," *Language and Style* 16 (1983) 87-106.

<sup>4</sup> Good overviews in J. C. HERITAGE, "Current Developments in Conversation Analysis," in D. Roger and P. Bull, ed., *Conversation: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Cleveland 1989; hereafter 'Heritage, "Developments"') 21-47; J. C. Heritage and J. M. Atkinson, "Introduction," in J. C. Heritage and J. M. Atkinson, ed., *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis* (Cambridge 1984) 1-15; S. C. LEVINSON, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge 1983: 'Levinson') 294-364. For an excellent discussion of the relationship between conversation analysis and ethnography, see M. Moerman, *Talking Culture: Ethnography and Conversation Analysis* (Philadelphia 1988) 1-18.

<sup>5</sup> Early criticisms of the universalizing tendencies of conversation analysis were well founded, because the earliest studies were limited primarily to English-speaking Americans. More recent studies analyzing various unrelated

One of the most basic observations of conversation analysis is preference organization—a misleading term, for it in no way refers to the ‘preferences’ of individual speakers, but rather to linguistic structures. ‘Preference’ here refers to the observation that language is organized in such a way that linguistically unmarked or ‘preferred’ actions are encouraged and linguistically marked or ‘dispreferred’ actions are discouraged, thereby limiting conflict (Heritage, “Developments” 26f). Students, for example, may verbally agree with a professor’s assessment in a class lecture (a linguistically preferred response, agreement), even though they strongly disagree with its content. Thus, individual ‘preferences’ and intentions are not what is meant by the term “preference organization.” Rather, “preference organization” refers to the linguistic structure of utterances.

Preference organization is best illustrated within the structure called adjacency pairs, such as question/answer, invitation/refusal. Adjacency pairs, which are fundamental to conversational organization, can be characterized as follows:<sup>6</sup>

Adjacency pairs are sequences of two moves (verbal or non-verbal) that are:

- (i) adjacent or containing an insertion sequence (e.g. a clarifying question between question and answer),
- (ii) produced by different individuals,
- (iii) ordered as a first part and a second part,
- (iv) typed, so that a particular first part has range of second

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languages have concluded that these languages have the same basic organization identified in earlier studies: e.g. on the Mayan language of Tzotzil, J. B. Haviland, “‘We Want to Borrow Your Mouth’: Tzotzil Marital Squabbles,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 30 (1988) 395–447; on an Aboriginal language of Australia, J. B. Haviland, “Guugu Yimidhurr Brother-in-Law Language,” *Language in Society* 8 (1979) 365–93; on Thai, Moerman (*supra* n.4); on Hebrew, B. Spolsky and J. Walters, “Jewish Styles of Worship: A Conversational Analysis,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 56 (1985) 51–65. An excellent discussion of the universality of the basic observations of conversation analysis in Moerman 3f.

<sup>6</sup> This characterization borrows heavily from Levinson’s discussion (303–07) of adjacency pairs, which is in turn influenced by that of E. A. Schlegloff and H. Sacks, “Opening Up Closings,” *Semiotica* 7 (1973) 289–327. Levinson’s revision of Schlegloff and Sacks incorporated observations from other studies (e.g. M. Merrit, “On Questioning Following Questions in Service Encounters,” *Language in Society* 5 [1976] 315–57), thereby allowing for more complexity and flexibility. My revision takes into account the possibility of non-verbal elements in adjacency pairs.

parts, those preferred and those dispreferred.

There are two types of adjacency pairs: (1) those with preferred second parts and (2) those with dispreferred second parts. Preferred seconds are unmarked, *i.e.*, generally brief utterances given without delay, and are unmitigated.<sup>7</sup> The following adjacency pair (assessment/agreement), taken from an actual conversation, well illustrates all the characteristics of adjacency pairs with preferred seconds. Note that the slash marks and indentation indicate where the second utterance began, overlapping the first utterance:<sup>8</sup>

A: You must admit it was fun the night we we//nt down.

B: It was great fun.

Speaker A produces a first part followed by the adjacent second part of speaker B (i, ii, iii). Speaker B's second part exhibits the characteristic of preferred seconds (iv), *i.e.*, it occurs without delay (in fact, it overlaps the first part) and is brief and unmitigated. Thus, we can see in this example, all the characteristics of adjacency pairs with preferred seconds.

In contrast, dispreferred seconds are marked, *i.e.*, generally lengthy, given after a delay, and respond to the first part of the adjacency pair only indirectly. Thus, dispreferred seconds generally contain the following four characteristics:<sup>9</sup> (1) a *delay*, (2) a *preface*, (3) an *account* of why the dispreferred response is performed, and (4) a *declination component*, which is often indirect and mitigated. Some examples of different types of delays include pauses before delivery, the use of a preface, and the initiation of insertion sequence (*e.g.* a clarifying question between request and refusal). Some examples of prefaces include the use of announcers (*e.g.* "Well ... " and "Uh ... "), token agreements before disagreements, appreciations before refusals, and qualifiers and hedges (*e.g.* "I don't know for sure, but ... "). An account is an explanation of why the preferred response is not being made, and a declination component is an indirect or mitigated manner of expressing the dispreferred response. The

<sup>7</sup> Heritage, "Developments" 26; Levinson 333.

<sup>8</sup> A. Pomerantz, "Agreeing and Disagreeing with Assessments: Some Features of Preferred/Dispreferred Turn Shapes," in Heritage and Adkinson (*supra* n.4) 66. This and the following example have been made more reader-friendly in that I removed some of the standard transcription conventions used by conversation analysts.

<sup>9</sup> See P. Drew, "Recalling Someone from the Past," in Roger and Bull (*supra* n.4) 111; Heritage, "Developments" 26; Levinson 334f.

adjacency pair (assessment/disagreement), taken from an actual conversation, illustrates well all the characteristics of adjacency pairs with dispreferred seconds (Pomerantz [*supra* n.8] 72):

A: By god, I can't even send my kid to public school because they're so damn lousy.

B: Well ... that's a generality.

Speaker B disagrees with the assessment; we can see, however, how this disagreement is mitigated with the use of the characteristic elements of dispreferred seconds. It begins with a *delay* in the form of a *preface*, which consists of the particle "Well." This preface introduces the *account* ("that's a generality"), which functions indirectly as the *declination component*.

As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>10</sup> adjacency pairs not only provide structure to conversation, but also organize the interaction between text and audience (hearers or readers). When, for example, an audience encounters a request by one character, it expects that another character will either accept or reject the request. If that character rejects the request, the audience expects the character to follow the structure of dispreferred seconds, especially providing the account for why the request was not accepted.

Below, I shall use preference organization to describe the semantic and extra-semantic levels of meaning associated with the "became silent to silence" formula. First, the semantic level of the formula will be shown to represent dispreferred seconds. Second, the semantic level of other formulae, found within the same narrative contexts as this particular formula, will also be shown to be related to the characteristics of dispreferred seconds. Finally, I shall examine more closely some occurrences of this formula to illustrate the relationship between the formula and its narrative context. In these examples it will become apparent that this formula alerts the audience that the character to speak will likely produce a dispreferred response.

### The "Became Silent to Silence" Formula

As we have just seen, dispreferred seconds have the following characteristics: delay, preface, account, and declination components. The "became silent to silence" formula represents the char-

<sup>10</sup> "The Identification and Filling of Gaps of Indeterminacy," *Language and Style*, forthcoming.

acteristic of *delay* with its repetitive emphasis on silence. In other words, the characters who "became silent to silence" are initiating a dispreferred second by pausing before they respond to the previous character's speech, if they respond at all. This formula could, standing alone, represent a dispreferred second that may never be verbalized, e.g., the refusal of a request by silent inaction. As we shall see below, however, it attracts other phrases that build upon this representation and introduces the next character's speech, which is often a dispreferred second.

The "silent to silence" formula attracts other formulae, which likewise represent characteristics of dispreferred seconds. These other formulae will be discussed here in two categories: (1) those providing an *account* of the character's silence, and (2) those immediately preceding the next character's speech.

In seven instances, this formula is followed immediately by another formula that provides an *account* of the dispreferred response. Thrice this formula is immediately followed by one of two semantically synonymous formulae: μῦθον ἄγασσάμενοι· μάλα γὰρ κρατερῶς ἀγόρευσεν (*Il.* 8.29, 9.694); μῦθον ἄγασσάμενοι· μάλα γὰρ κρατερῶς ἀπέειπεν (*Il.* 9.431: "amazed at his speech. He had spoken to them very strongly"). In these two formulae, the *accounts* for the dispreferred response of silence are given as the characters' amazement at the forcefulness of the previous character's speech. Twice the "became silent to silence" formula is immediately followed by κηλήθμῳ δ' ἔσχοντο κατὰ μέγαρα σκίοέντα (*Od.* 11.334, 13.2: "[they were now] held in fascination throughout the shadowy chambers"). Here the *accounts* of the dispreferred response of silence refer to the audience's fascination at Odysseus' telling of his tragic journey. The remaining two formulae, which immediately follow the "became silent to silence" formula, also provide *accounts* in terms of the audience's emotional responses: αἶδεσθην μὲν ἀνήνασθαι, δεῖσαν δ' ὑποδέχθαι (*Il.* 7.93: "on the one hand, being shameful of refusing [him], and, on the other hand, lacking [courage] to accept [his challenge]), and δὴν δ' ἄνεψ ἦσαν τετιπόντες υἱὲς Ἀχαιῶν (*Il.* 9.30: "for a long time the grieving sons of the Achaeans were mute"). In each of these seven instances, we see how the characteristics of dispreferred seconds extend in the narrator's introduction beyond the "became silent to silence" formula. They all refer to the motivation for the silence or, in the words of conversation analysis, they are themselves the *accounts* for the previously described *delay* in the "became silent to silence" formula.

In every case, the "became silent to silence" formula is followed by other phrases that specifically identify the next speaker. Four phrases, which account for eleven of the sixteen instances,<sup>11</sup> are formulaic: ὄψὲ δὲ δὴ μετέειπε [name with epithet] ("but after a long time spoke [name with epithet], *Il.* 7.399; 8.30; 9.31, 432, 696; *Od.* 7.155; 20.321); τοῖσι δὲ καὶ μετέειπε [name with epithet] ("but from among them spoke [name with epithet]," *Il.* 3.96; 10.219); ὄψὲ δὲ δὴ [name] ἀνίστατο καὶ μετέειπε (*Il.* 7.94, "but after a long time [name] stood and spoke"); and τοῖσι δὲ [name] ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπε (*Od.* 16.394, "but from among them [name] said and spoke"). Notice that each of these four formulae builds upon the function of the "became silent to silence" formula. First, they all include the contrastive conjunction (δέ, "but") to suggest that the silence will soon be broken and, second, two of these formulae emphasize the *delay* expressed in the silence with the temporal particle ὄψέ ("after a long time").

In summary, we have seen how the narrator's introduction draws from the characteristics of dispreferred seconds. The "became silent to silence" formulae begins the narrator's introduction and functions as a *delay*. This formula is sometimes followed by other formulae that provide *accounts* for the dispreferred response, e.g., the characters are amazed at the forcefulness of the previous character's speech (*Il.* 8.29; 9.431, 694). In every case, the "became silent to silence" formula is followed by a phrase that introduces the specific character who usually puts the dispreferred second into words. These introductory phrases include two formulae that emphasize the *delay* of the dispreferred response in their use of the temporal particle ὄψέ. In some cases, the use of these different characteristic elements of dispreferred seconds proleptically introduce the next character's speech, also a dispreferred second.

In other cases, the next speaker elaborates upon the dispreferred second represented in the "became silent to silence" formula. The following examples are arranged according to their illustrative value for dispreferred seconds and will be discussed within their narrative context in the following basic pattern: (1) the character's speech that initiated the adjacency pair and to which the silence indicates a *delay*; (2) the formula and any

<sup>11</sup> The other five consist of extended and more elaborate narrative introductions: *Il.* 10.314-18; 23.677f; *Od.* 8.235; 11.334f; 13.2f.

related phrases within the narrator's introduction; and (3) the following character's speech.

*Od.* 16.364–405: Antinoös proposes to the other suitors that they murder Telemachus (364–92). Immediately after his speech the "became silent to silence" formula (393) occurs, describing the other suitors' response and suggesting that some suitor will oppose Antinoös' plan. The next line (394) introduces Amphinomos, contrasting him with the other suitors by use of  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ . The narrator then provides more introductory information, including a complementary description of him as Penelope's favorite among the suitors (394–99). Amphinomos' speech is a refusal that contains all the characteristics of dispreferred seconds. The *delay* consists not only of the preceding silence, but also in the form of a *preface* in the address, "My dear friends." He then opposes Antinoös' proposal by refusing to participate in it: "I for my part would not be willing to murder Telemachus" (400f).<sup>12</sup> Notice that this refusal is mitigated in that he does not explicitly say that he will prevent Antinoös' plan, but simply that he will not participate in it. Also, Amphinomos states that if he believed that Zeus approved of the plan he would kill Telemachus himself (404). He also provides an *account* for his refusal with two parts: (1) "it is terrible to kill one of royal blood" (401f) and (2) the gods have not yet been consulted (402–05). Therefore, the "became silent to silence" formula contains the characteristics of *delay* associated with dispreferred seconds and, therefore, proleptically informs the audience that Antinoös' plan will be opposed by another suitor, who turns out to be Amphinomos, whose response also contains each of the characteristics of dispreferred seconds: delay, preface, account, and declination component.

*Il.* 9.9–49: Agamemnon requested that the Achaeans abandon their attempt to take Troy and to return Helen: "Come then, do as I say, let us all be won over; let us run away with our ships to the beloved land of our fathers since no longer now shall we capture Troy of the wide ways" (26ff). Immediately after these lines, the "became silent to silence" formula (29) alerts the reader that those who heard Agamemnon would refuse his request by describing their delayed response. The next line (30) provides the *account* for their *delay* by expressing the 'sorrow'

<sup>12</sup> This and subsequent translations by Lattimore (*Iliad* [Chicago 1951] and *Odyssey* [New York 1967]), except for my own translations given for the formulae discussed above.



the Achaeans felt because of Agamemnon's request. Then comes the formula that introduces the next speaker: "but after a long time spoke Diomedes of the great war cry" (31). Diomedes refuses Agamemnon's request (32f), thereby closing the adjacency pair with a dispreferred second. His refusal contains some characteristic elements of dispreferred seconds: a considerable *delay* ("after a long time") and a *preface*, the address "son of Atreus." The observation that it is not as mitigated as the previous example suggests that the audience was perhaps expected to understand the forcefulness of Diomedes' speech.

*Il.* 9.308–605: Achilles refuses Agamemnon's apology, which Odysseus brought to him, and advises the Achaeans to "sail back home again" (417f). He then requests that Phoenix stay so that he can sail back home with him (426–29). Immediately after his speech, the "became silent to silence" formula (430) suggests that Achilles' advice to sail home will be refused. This silence is accounted for in the next line: "amazed at his speech. He had spoken to them very strongly" (431). As Achilles' speech also included a request of Phoenix, it is not surprising that he is the one identified in the subsequent line as the next speaker: "but after a long time spoke Phoenix the aged horseman" (432). Notice that Phoenix's speech has been foreshadowed: like the others, he is silent for a long time. Phoenix accepts Achilles' specific request concerning him—a much mitigated acceptance, however, in the form of a question beginning with a conditional clause: "If it is going home, glorious Achilleus, you ponder in your heart ... how then shall I, dear child, be left in this place behind you all alone?" (434f, 437f). Phoenix then retells his experiences with and loyalty to Achilles (438–95). His conditioned acceptance and his statements of loyalty are part of an elaborate *preface* that delays the real thrust of his speech, *i.e.*, his request that Achilles beat down his anger and reconsider accepting Agamemnon's apology (496f). Phoenix then extolls the virtue of beating down one's anger in his tale of Meleagros (497–599) before repeating his request that Achilles reconsider Agamemnon's offer and join the fighting (600–05). Phoenix's request is an indirect refusal of Achilles' advice that all the Achaeans return home. Note also that his request for Achilles to beat down his anger functions indirectly as the *account* for the refusal, *i.e.*, Achilles' advice is understood as coming from someone controlled too much by his rage. Therefore, the dispreferred response, proleptically introduced by the "became silent to silence" formula, is verbalized in Phoenix's speech and he

delays this dispreferred response further by prefacing his refusal with a token agreement and an extended statement of loyalty. This extended *delay* in the form of a *preface* mitigates Phoenix's refusal of Achilles' advice that all the Achaeans return home and mitigates the accusatory *account* that Phoenix implies.

*Od.* 8.202–55: Odysseus angrily challenges any Phaeacian to throwing the discus, boxing, wrestling, or a foot race (202–33). The Phaeacians' dispreferred response is *prefaced* by the *delay* described in the "became silent to silence" formula (234). Alcinoös is introduced (235) and verbalizes the dispreferred second: no Phaeacian questions his excellence and, therefore, no one will accept his challenge (236–40). In fact, Alcinoös explains the silence: "in a way no man would find fault with your excellence, if he knew in his heart how to speak sensibly" (239f).

*Il.* 7.385–402: Priam's herald delivers his offer: he will return all Achaean possessions that Alexander took and add to them his own, if the Achaeans leave without Helen (385–97). Immediately after these lines falls the "became silent to silence" formula (398). The following line (399) introduces Diomedes' speech, emphasizing the Achaeans' *delay* by the use of ὀψέ, but contrasting Diomedes from the others with δέ. Diomedes then exhorts the Achaeans to refuse Priam's offer, giving the following *account*: Diomedes believes that they are near victory (400ff).

*Il.* 10.204–27: Nestor requests that someone go *alone* to spy on the Trojans (204–17). The "became silent to silence" formula immediately follows (218). Diomedes is then introduced (219) and gives the *account* for the refusal implicit in the silence, *i.e.*, it is not safe or wise to go alone. Diomedes states, however, that he is willing to go with others (220–26). Many others then break their silence: they are willing to go with him (227).

In the above passages the "became silent to silence" formula proleptically introduces the next character's speech, which contains the characteristic elements of dispreferred seconds. Not all the occurrences of this formula, however, have this function. Nevertheless, even some that do not function proleptically exhibit some characteristics of dispreferred seconds. Below, a few of these passages will be discussed within their narrative context following the same basic pattern as above.

*Il.* 7.67–122:<sup>13</sup> Hector challenges the Achaeans to settle the conflict by a duel between an Achaean and himself (67–90). His challenge is met by inaction described in the “became silent to silence” formula (92) and is explained in an *account* in the next line: “on the one hand, being shameful of refusing [him], and, on the other hand, lacking [courage] to accept [his challenge]” (93). Then Menelaus is introduced as the next speaker: “but *after a long time* old Menelaos stood and spoke” (94). Menelaus’ speech criticizes the other Achaeans as only brave in words but shamefully fearful in their active refusal of Hector’s challenge (96–102). After his speech, he begins to put on his armor to challenge Hector, but Agamemnon stops him (103–22). In much the same way as in the previous example, the “became silent to silence” formula refers to a dispreferred second that is not explicitly verbalized in the next speaker’s speech, but is rather characterized as a refusal of Hector’s challenge in the form of cowardly inactivity. Thus the formula refers to this inactivity and is followed by an *account* for this activity, *i.e.*, the Achaeans lacked courage—in the next line (93) and in Menelaus’ criticism of the inactive refusal.

*Od.* 7.146–77: Odysseus requests aid for returning home from Arete, the Phaeacian ruler’s wife (146–52). The “became silent to silence” formula immediately after his request expresses the dispreferred response of the Phaeacians to their *delay* in accepting his request. The following line (155) introduces the next speaker, Echeneos, and lines 156ff provide more information about him. Echeneos does not refuse Odysseus’ request; the request was not made of him. Rather Echeneos cajoles Alcinoös, Arete’s husband, for the implied refusal in his (and, by inference, her) *delay* in accepting Odysseus’ request. Echeneos’ cajoling also provides an *account* for the silence in the court: “Alcinoös, this is not the better way.... These others are holding back because they await your order” (159, 161). He then directs Alcinoös to accept Odysseus’ request: “But come, raise the stranger up and seat him on a silver-studded chair” (162f). Only after Echeneos’ intervention does Alcinoös accept Odysseus’ request (167–77). Therefore, the formula here introduces a dispreferred response, never verbalized in any character’s speech but simply implied in their silent failure to react

<sup>13</sup> See also *Il.* 3.84–110, where the same theme occurs: Hector proposes to settle the conflict in a duel between Alexander and Menelaus; the “became silent to silence” formula (95) occurs; then Menelaus accepts the challenge.

to Odysseus' request. This inaction, however, elicits a response from Echeneos, who urges Alcinoös to accept Odysseus' request. Now Alcinoös accepts Odysseus' request, gives him an honored seat, and provides for him a feast, thereby beginning the process for his trip home.

*Il.* 8.5–37: Zeus threatens to whip any god or goddess who helps either the Achaeans or the Trojans (5–27). After these lines come the "became silent to silence" formula and another formula that provides the *account* for the gods' and goddesses' silence: "Amazed at his speech. He had spoken to him very strongly" (29). Athena is then introduced in a formula with ὀψέ, which emphasizes the *delay*, but contrasts her with the others by use of δέ (30). Athena's speech can be understood as an acceptance of Zeus' threatening demand: "Still we shall keep out of the fighting, as you command us" (35). Her speech, however, still contains elements characteristic of dispreferred seconds: it occurs after considerable *delay* expressed in the "became silent to silence" formula with ὀψέ in the formula introducing her (30); she uses an elaborate *preface* exalting Zeus' power (31f), expresses sorrow for the Danaans (33f), and concludes with what could be understood as qualifying her acceptance of Zeus' demand: "yet we will put good counsel in the Argives; if it may help them, so that not all of them will die because of your anger" (36f). The phrase "because of your anger" (and her previous expression of sorrow) can thus be understood as an *account* for Athena's wish to disobey Zeus' threat. This curious mix of characteristics of dispreferred seconds in what could be understood as a preferred second may foreshadow Athena's later invention on behalf of the Achaeans, which clearly violates this command (*e.g.* *Il.* 10.482ff; 18.202–38).

## Conclusion

Like the formulae πυκινὸν ἔπος and ὑπόδρα ἰδῶν, analyzed by Foley and Holoka respectively, the formula οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἀκὴν ἐγένοντο σιωπῇ is not a mere oral compositional device. Instead, the "became silent to silence" formula has a close relationship to its narrative context. It represents a dispreferred response to whatever was previously spoken by semantically incorporating a characteristic of dispreferred seconds (*delay*) in

the repetitious phrase "became silent to silence."<sup>14</sup> The other formulae attracted to it are also not mere oral compositional devices. These formulae build upon the characteristics of the dispreferred second introduced by the "became silent to silence" formula (1) by providing an *account* for the dispreferred response, (2) by introducing the next speaker by contrasting the speaker with the other characters (δέ), and (3) in some instances by highlighting the *delay* further (ὄψέ). In most cases, these formulae together introduce the following speech, which is usually a dispreferred second containing a *delay*, a *preface*, an *account*, and a *declination component*.

The "became silent to silence" formula therefore functions like the interjection "Well ..." in spoken English: *i.e.*, both alert the audience that a dispreferred response will generally follow. In this way, when Homer's audience (and the modern reader competently familiar with Homer) encounters Homer's use of this formula, they expect that someone will speak for the silent characters, producing a dispreferred response.<sup>15</sup> In most cases, Homer meets their expectations by providing a dispreferred response in the following character's speech that includes the expected *account* for why the preferred response is not performed.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> My conclusions concerning the extra-semantic meaning of this formula are quite similar to that of Foley (n. 16 *infra*: 23), who summarizes the pattern in which this formula exerts its extra-semantic meaning as follows: "an initial speech proposing or reporting a radical, usually unexpected action, will give way to stunned silence, followed by a response that immediately or eventually involves substantial qualification if not dismissal of the proposed or reported action."

<sup>15</sup> For an extended discussion of how adjacency pairs guide readers as they interact with texts, see Person (*supra* n.10).

<sup>16</sup> Research for this article was conducted at the 1992 National Endowment for Humanities Summer Seminar on Oral Tradition in Literature, hosted by the University of Missouri at Columbia. The director, John Foley, was helpful and supportive of my ideas and provided me with a manuscript of his then forthcoming article on this same formula, "Sixteen Moments of Silence in Homer" (see now *QUCC* 79 [1995] 7-26). I am very much indebted to his generous remarks and support and would like to dedicate this article to him. I also benefited from my discussion with another seminar colleague, John W. Roth, who applies speech-act theory to Homer.