

# Agamemnon's *Iliad*

Robert J. Rabel

AGAMEMNON'S FAMOUS SPEECH on the nature of delusion (ἄτη) in the lives of men and gods (*Il.* 19.78–144) tells with parable and paradigm how Hera publicly frustrated Zeus, deluded by a personified *Ate*, in accomplishing his purposes, and he claims that these events on Olympus provide a meaningful precedent for his quarrel with Achilles. This speech has attracted voluminous commentary, especially since E. R. Dodds discerned within it the profound and sincere meditation of 'Homeric man' on the theme of moral responsibility and human freedom.<sup>1</sup> More recently, in a spirited critique of the character of Agamemnon, Oliver Taplin has dismissed the speech as a case of "obvious special pleading," carried out by a man who, despite his every advantage, behaves badly and is characterized by the poet in a consistently negative light.<sup>2</sup> Yet judgments of Agamemnon's character, whether based upon the construction of the poem, the observations of other characters, or the remarks of the narrator, ought to take into account the perspective of the king, who in his last major speech in the poem is permitted a vigorous personal self-defense.<sup>3</sup> In this paper I argue that Agamemnon's words in the assembly of Book 19 reflect the humiliation that he suffered at Achilles'

<sup>1</sup> E. R. Dodds, "Agamemnon's Apology," in *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley 1951) 1–27.

<sup>2</sup> O. TAPLIN, "Agamemnon's Role in the *Iliad*," in C. Pelling, ed., *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (Oxford 1990: hereafter 'Taplin') 65, 76.

<sup>3</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, tr. C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin 1981) 334, argued that the crucial distinction between the novel and the epic lies in the 'polyphony' of the former, *i.e.*, the hero of the novel is allowed a personal voice that may stand over against the claims of the voices of other characters and of the narrator or the author. Bakhtin claimed that in the epic, on the other hand, "all meanings are shared" and "there is one unitary and singular belief system." This paper is based on the premise that Homer accords a character like Agamemnon full status as an 'I' who is able to contest meaning both with the other characters in the story and with the epic narrator. In this way Homer resembles Dostoevsky, whom Bakhtin took as the ideal exemplar of the "dialogic imagination."

hands at the conclusion of the assembly in Book 1, and also that they comprise a sort of panoramic summary of the *Iliad* from his own idiosyncratic viewpoint. A close analysis of the climactic scene of the assembly in Book 1 will provide the context necessary to appreciate how cleverly the king, despite his obvious limitations as a speaker, manages to employ the resources of rhetoric in Book 19. I recognize that in arguing for a close connection between events so remote from each other I am assuming for the poet great powers of foreshadowing in the maintenance of a grand architectural design that probably transcends the limitations of oral improvisation and implies the careful planning ahead possible only through literary composition.<sup>4</sup>

Agamemnon closes his part of the debate in the fateful assembly of Book 1 with what some commentators suppose to be a rhetorical question assessing the character of his rebellious subordinate Achilles. At 1.290f Monro and Allen read:<sup>5</sup>

εἰ δέ μιν αἰχμητὴν ἔθεσαν θεοὶ αἰὲν ἔόντες,  
 τοὔνεκά οἱ προθέουσιν ὀνειδέα μυθήσασθαι;  
 τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑποβλήδην ἡμείβετο δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς·

The text can barely be construed in this present form, and there is little agreement about what point the king intends to make. Aristarchus took ὀνειδέα as subject of the verb προθέουσιν: “do insults run forward for him to utter them?” Others take the main verb as a form of προτίθημι. Thus Bekker would read προθέωσιν, the aorist subjunctive: “Are we to look to them [*sc.* the gods] to suggest words of insult?” Walter Leaf decided that the passage had been hopelessly corrupted. Jasper Griffin re-

<sup>4</sup> On the basis of Milman Parry's work, G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge 1962) 259, concluded that within the *Iliad* “there are few widely separated repetitions or similarities which compel the assumption of significant cross-references, however subtle, and that the oral principle of economy of phraseology ... is sufficient to explain most of these apparent overtones.” On the other hand, A. Heubeck, “Homeric Studies Today,” in B. C. Fenik, ed., *Homer: Tradition and Invention* (Leiden 1978) 16, has concluded that “even a superficial analysis of the *Iliad* is enough to show that it did not come to be by means of free improvisation.... The virtue of improvisation was replaced by the aptitude for planned composition.” I think that a subtle system of cross-references linking the assemblies of Books 1 and 19 implies the planned composition envisioned by Heubeck.

<sup>5</sup> All quotations from the *Iliad* employ the text of D. B. Monro and T. W. Allen<sup>3</sup> (Oxford 1920).

marks that the thought in line 291 seems obscure.<sup>6</sup> G. S. Kirk, though agreeing with Aristarchus' interpretation, acknowledges that it "fails to contribute to a strong statement overall." Richmond Lattimore assumes that the sentence is declarative, not a question; otherwise, his translation seems to convey the likeliest sense of the reading of the Oxford text printed above:

And if the everlasting gods have made him a spearman,  
yet they have not given him the right to speak abusively.<sup>7</sup>

Commentators who express worry over the meaning of this passage have usually assumed that Agamemnon's obscurity must represent a problem in the transmission of the text. To my knowledge, no one has considered that the difficulty may be a product of the poet's intention, and as such is a reflection of the crisis of communication that marks the breakdown of the assembly. For the 'stage-direction' introducing Achilles' final speech in the assembly says that the hero interrupted (*ὑποβλήδην*, 1.292) the king. Perhaps the interruption by the angry and impatient Achilles has produced an aposiopesis in Agamemnon's final speech. Indeed, Agamemnon, in likely reference to this event, will later chastise those who interrupt a speaker before the assembly.

Whatever the state of the text, most scholars would probably agree with Kirk that its final sentence seems lame and, as such, a fitting conclusion to a sorry rhetorical effort. Excluding Achilles' brief colloquy with Athena (1.202–18), Agamemnon's final speech is the shortest within the assembly and lacks even a semblance of coherence, consisting merely of a brief flurry of three largely unconnected and even contradictory units of thought. First, the king acknowledges that Nestor in the immediately preceding speech has spoken everything *κατὰ μοῖραν* (286), advising the king not to take Achilles' prize and to cease from his *menos* (275–82). Agamemnon, however, in the second sentence hastens immediately to an angry criticism of Achilles that ignores completely the old man's advice. For the body of the speech consists merely of an extended parataxis of infinitive phrases that noticeably fails to develop cumulative

<sup>6</sup> Aristarchus, cited in G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, I: Books 1–4 (Cambridge 1985) 82; Bekker, in W. Leaf, *The Iliad* I<sup>2</sup> (London 1900) *ad loc.*; cf. Leaf 25; J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford 1980) 53.

<sup>7</sup> Kirk (*supra* n.6); R. Lattimore, tr., *The Iliad of Homer* (Chicago 1951).

significance as the king lurches from colon to colon. Achilles, he says, wishes *περὶ πάντων ἔμμεναι ἄλλων, πάντων μὲν κρατέειν, πάντεσσι δ' ἀνάσσειν, πᾶσι δὲ σημαίνειν* (287ff). Here the scholiast remarks, "those who are angry never think they have spoken at sufficient length"—a comment both generous to the king's rhetorical style and at the same time accurate in its assessment of his present temper and impulses. Agamemnon, one feels, is only winding up. His aim appears to be a certain amplitude of expression, yet he turns out one of the briefest speeches in the assembly. For in the midst of his third sentence, the significance of which will remain forever unknown—much like the words that Aeneas would have spoken to Dido in the Underworld if only she had not fled (*Aen.* 6.467–73)—Achilles cuts him off. Such restriction of speech, a prominent technique of the Vergilian narrator and his characters, appears especially shocking since it rarely occurs in the *Iliad*, where speech tends to exclude action, and even a character like Thersites is allowed his full say.<sup>8</sup> Leaf and others may be wrong then in assuming that the *text* is corrupt; the problem may lie rather in the incoherence of the king's thought and expression and in the violent reaction that these elicit from Achilles. Indeed, to be at all effective, the rhetorical question that our text envisions necessarily implies 'no' as the expected answer: the gods do *not* license the speaking of reproaches on the basis of heroic status and achievement. Yet an Iliadic hero would certainly answer 'yes' to this question, for as Richard P. Martin has recently shown, eminence as a warrior provides exactly the grounds that justify speaking abusively (*ὀνειδέα μυθήσασθαι*, 291) of others.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For the characteristic 'cut-off' technique of the *Aeneid*, cf. R. O. A. M. Lyne, *Further Voices in Vergil's Aeneid* (Oxford 1989) *passim*. The courtesy normally extended to speakers in the Homeric corpus seems not to cover the performances of singers. Thus 'the two' heralds step forward and interrupt Achilles in mid-song at 9.192f. In the *Odyssey* Penelope interrupts Phemius (1.137f); the unnamed singer appears to leave off his song upon the arrival of Telemachus at 4.15f; Alcinous twice interrupts Demodocus (8.97f, 536f). As Milman Parry (in A. Parry, ed., *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry* [Oxford 1987] 457) observes, "the poet is at the convenience of his hearers."

<sup>9</sup> R. P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad* (Ithaca 1989) 118. I disagree, however, with Martin's contention that Agamemnon asks an inappropriate rhetorical question here because he is untutored in the poetics of heroic performance. Rather, his anger (noted by the scholiast) is simply blocking the development of coherent thought.

In his important discussion of the concept of *mythos* in Homer, Martin (*supra* n.9: 12, 54) has convincingly demonstrated the importance of the legitimation of heroic authority through its public expression in monumental speeches of persuasion and command. Size and importance, he shows, are correlated not only for the narrator but for the characters within the poem as well. (Contrast modern rhetoric's reduction of significant political discourse to the fifteen-second sound bite.) Within an aesthetic that exalts the monumental, Nestor and Achilles in their different ways emerge as the most effective speakers, with Agamemnon, according to Martin, perhaps the poorest. He is impoverished in the realm of memory<sup>10</sup> and experience and attempts to compensate for this deficiency through a heaping up of detail that becomes not only a parody of the Nestorian 'full style' but also a target for the jibes of Achilles. Indeed, the elaborate rhetoric that conveys the king's offer of gifts in Book 9 becomes the battleground on which the two antagonists of Book 1 further contest their claims. For much of the dramatic interest of Book 9, as both Martin and Michael Lynn-George have shown in their different ways, results from Achilles' active pillaging of vocabulary and forms from the king's list of gifts, his citation and displacement of Agamemnon's words in order to contest and finally to reject their claims.<sup>11</sup>

Yet Achilles' strategy within the privacy of his shelter in Book 9 only continues on a grander scale his pointed and public ridicule of the king in the assembly of Book 1. There, Agamemnon says "he wants to give orders to all" (πᾶσι δὲ σημαίνειν, 289). Achilles, after his interruption, seizes upon this very word in response: "Don't give orders to me" (μὴ γὰρ ἔμοιγε σήμαιν', 295f). Similarly, in the fourth line of his aborted speech, Agamemnon claims that some will not obey Achilles' commands (τινα' οὐ πείσεσθαι, 289). In the same metrical

<sup>10</sup> Martin (*supra* n.9) 114 observes that only one of Agamemnon's forty-six speeches originates primarily as a discourse of recollection, and this is the speech about *Ate's* influence over Zeus (discussed at length below). I will suggest that this is not a case of memory of a past event outside the poem — what G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, tr. J. E. Lewin (Ithaca 1980) 49f, calls an "external analepsis"; rather than an act of memory, Agamemnon is engaged in a quite sophisticated rationalization of his conduct within the assembly of Book 1.

<sup>11</sup> Martin (*supra* n.9) 172f; M. Lynn-George, *Epos: Word, Narrative, and the Iliad* (Atlantic Highlands 1988) 108.

position of the same line of his reponse, Achilles nicely counters: "I think that I shall not obey you" (οὐ γὰρ ἔγωγ' ἔτι σοὶ πείσεσθαι οἶω, 296). Achilles' strategy of interruption here, the taking of words from the mouth of their speaker at a moment of heightened emotion, may be repeated later in Book 18 in conversation with Thetis. There, his goddess mother tells the hero that after Hector's death his own doom is forthwith (αὐτίκα, 18.96) fixed. Dieter Lohmann suggests that the goddess has more to say, but her son interrupts her.<sup>12</sup> Fastening upon the word αὐτίκα (18.98) Achilles puts a period to his mother's utterance and drives the dialogue in new directions at variance with the wishes of the original speaker, much as he does at the conclusion of the assembly in Book 1. Such a practice may be a remote ancestor of the "Catchword-Technik" that Walter Jens sees as a common feature of passages of stichomythia in Attic tragedy.<sup>13</sup> Finally Achilles closes the assembly with the threat to make Agamemnon's black blood spurt up around his spear (1.302f).

If I am correct, Achilles has artfully collapsed the distinction between word and deed in order not only to assert but also to demonstrate his preeminence over Agamemnon in both fields of heroic endeavor. His curt dismissal of Agamemnon's performance as a speaker of words is even more dramatically effective than his earlier criticism of the king as deficient in the performance of deeds (1.225–31). For his part, Agamemnon concludes the assembly of Book 1 not with a rhetorical question whose basic premise defies heroic logic nor with a call for Achilles to show a little humility before the gods; rather, the king is probably left stung with resentment at the curtailment of his own poorly-expressed thought. When the two antagonists meet next in Book 19, Achilles will be subtly censured for his unprecedented breach of heroic decorum in the assembly of Book 1.

Book 19 may be read as a re-enactment or resolution-through-assembly of the quarrel of Book 1. Patroclus is dead; Thetis has brought her son his new armor, and Achilles for the second time in the poem calls an assembly of the Greeks. He dismisses the subject of his anger in two lines (19.67f) and urges Agamemnon to marshall the troops for the coming struggle (68–73).

<sup>12</sup> D. Lohmann, *Die Komposition der Reden in der Ilias* (Berlin 1970) 145.

<sup>13</sup> W. Jens, *Die Stichomythie in der frühen griechischen Tragödie* (Munich 1955) 42f.

The army's response—expressions of joy for the unsaying of Achilles' wrath (74f)—seems a natural and sufficient prelude to a resumption of the battle. Yet the assembly continues with a series of verbose speeches that might seem to upset the normal Iliadic balance between length and importance. Even the narrator seems drawn into the dynamics of excess that inform the contents of Book 19. His lengthy descriptions of oath, sacrifice, and the feeding of the army have tried the patience of a number of critics including Denys Page, who imagines that in an earlier and better tale Achilles rushed right into battle, not waiting to make and hear speeches in the marketplace. "[N]othing is not mentioned," says Page in exasperation, calling Book 19 "a sorry introduction" to the crisis of the *Iliad*.<sup>14</sup> Page's impatience is fully justified but is likely an unwitting response to conscious artistic intent. E. T. Owen observes: "That the poet is fully aware of what he is doing, fully realizes the exasperation he is causing by his long-windedness, is shown by his representing Achilles as exasperated almost beyond endurance by the very thing that is exasperating us."<sup>15</sup> Book 19 is charged with artful suspense: will Achilles remain true to the little we know from Book 1 of his *ethos* in public assemblies and once again interrupt the king? Though expressing resentment for the delay caused by the speech—"Now is not the time," he says, "for idle talk" (κλοτοπεύειν: 149)—Achilles manages to give each speaker his say, and then some!

In contradistinction to Book 1, Agamemnon is permitted to speak at length. His normal hesitation and nervousness are compounded, I suspect, by the memory of the last occasion on which he confronted Achilles. Hence, his pronounced tendency to awkward parataxis begins to express itself once again in a flurry of seemingly repetitive generalizations, retracing the same ground, until finally the speech restates and develops its major point through illustrative parable and paradigm. We must note, however, that the difficulties of interpretation that surround both the narrator's introduction to the speech, beginning at line 76, and the exordium of the speech itself, are resolved when we see here Agamemnon's reactions to the traumatic close of the assembly in Book 1.

The narrator relates that Agamemnon spoke from his seat *without standing up* (19.77):

<sup>14</sup> D. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* (Berkeley 1959) 314f.

<sup>15</sup> E. T. Owen, *The Story of the Iliad* (London 1947) 191.

αὐτόθεν ἐξ ἔδρης, οὐδ' ἐν μέσσοισιν ἀναστάς.

The significance of this ploy, unprecedented in the Homeric corpus, is unclear. The suggestion of the scholiast that Agamemnon sat because of pain from his wounded arm is probably rightly dismissed by Leaf, though revived by Edwards in his recent commentary.<sup>16</sup> Agathe Thornton has argued that Agamemnon sits in order to lower his body in supplication to Achilles, a suggestion rightly dismissed by Taplin as highly implausible, inconsistent with Agamemnon's character, and at odds with his rhetorical strategy of self-defense in the following speech.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the difficulty of line 77, obscure enough in its own right, is compounded by an apparent conflict with the exordium of the speech, since the king initially says (79f)

ἑσταότος μὲν καλὸν ἀκούειν, οὐδὲ ἔοικεν  
ὕββάλλειν· χαλεπὸν γὰρ ἐπισταμένῳ περ ἔοντι.

Page, expressing further exasperation with the plot and construction of Book 19, points out the apparent conflict in the relationship between the 'stage-direction' of the narrator (19.77) and the opening of the speech:

There follows the reply of Agamemnon, beginning thus: "Agamemnon spoke from the place where he sat, *not standing up in the midst of them*: 'O Greeks, when a man is standing up as I am, it is right to listen to him and wrong to interrupt'."<sup>18</sup>

The narrator says that the king, for whatever reason, remains sitting during the speech, yet Agamemnon *seems* to claim that he is standing up! Zenodotus attempted to solve the apparent problem by excising the narrator's 'stage-direction' (77) from the text. In his first edition, Leaf resorted to the same expedient,

<sup>16</sup> Leaf *ad loc.*; M. W. Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary V: Books 17–20* (Cambridge 1991) 143f: "the poet is using the 'wounded men sit down' motif to allow Agamemnon to taunt Achilles." I think that Agamemnon's strategy is much more subtle than Edwards implies.

<sup>17</sup> A. Thornton, *Homer's Iliad: Its Composition and the Motif of Supplication* (Göttingen 1984) 128f; Taplin 75.

<sup>18</sup> Page (*supra* n.14) 313. Of course there is nothing in Homer's text that corresponds to Page's "as I am."



but in his second edition restored the line. Claiming that it would be difficult to account for it as an interpolation, he argued as a last resort that the conflict could be resolved if line 77 is taken to mean: "standing up where he was sitting and not in their midst," as if it were usual for the speakers to leave their seats and come forward to some sort of rostrum in the midst of the assembly, a practice that Agamemnon here abandons. Leaf's solution raises the same difficulty that bothered Zenodotus: why would the king not advance to this hypothesized rostrum? Fortunately, the text can be construed without alteration or recourse to such unlikely hypotheses. Confronting his nemesis face-to-face for the first time since the assembly of Book 1, Agamemnon issues a subtle and stinging rebuke to Achilles on the impropriety of his behavior in that earlier assembly. His sitting, as we shall see, serves as a gesture to enforce the rebuke. Indeed, the entire speech on the nature of ἄτη (78-144), probably the king's best rhetorical effort, effectively employs gesture, generalization, parable, and paradigm in defense of the argument that deleterious consequences result when a king is interrupted and thwarted by his subordinates. And this remains Agamemnon's final word on the meaning of the *Iliad*.<sup>19</sup>

Both the target and the polemical nature of Agamemnon's opening remarks have gone largely unnoticed, perhaps because his veiled criticism of Achilles is subtly generalized in a string of remarks about proper etiquette in the assembly.<sup>20</sup> The king constructs the altogether reasonable argument that, in the interest of effective communication, one ought not to interrupt (ὑββάλλειν) a speaker standing before the assembly (19.78-82). He cleverly suppresses the minor premise of his enthymeme, without mentioning Achilles' earlier behavior, and lets the audience draw the conclusion that at least in this one respect Achilles was in the wrong. ὑββάλλειν is of great importance here. Leaf rightly took it as 'to interrupt', basing his interpreta-

<sup>19</sup> Taplin 77 notes that Agamemnon speaks his last words in the poem in Book 19.

<sup>20</sup> Agamemnon's strategy here may be compared to that of the coryphaeus in Aesch. *Ag.* 1612; cf. E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon* (Oxford 1950) *ad loc.*: "Using a common form of polemic he [*sc.* the coryphaeus] does not explicitly attack the conduct of his opponent, but seemingly formulates a maxim for his own conduct in contrast to that of the other man. This renders the rebuke still sharper. Here at the beginning of his reply the coryphaeus repudiates the tone and content of Aegisthus' speech on the ground of a universal religious and moral sentiment."

tion upon the obvious sense of the derivative ὑποβλήδην discussed above. Forms of ὑποβάλλω occur in Homer only in these two lines (1.292, 19.80). According to Leaf, however, the claim that it is unseemly to interrupt is spoken in response to the loud applause of the army that has just greeted Achilles' short speech unsaying his wrath (74f). Yet the Achaean expression of joy constitutes no interruption. Agamemnon's gesture of sitting compels the audience to seek a more remote context for the proper target of his remark, since no speaker is standing at the moment of utterance. The king in fact is obliquely alluding to a very painful memory, the origin of his quarrel with Achilles, and providing a bit of social commentary on an action that the narrator in his typically non-judgmental fashion had earlier qualified simply through the adverb ὑποβλήδην.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the gesture of sitting, as the commentator Epaphroditus saw, nicely enforces the content of his message by demonstrating the fragility of the spoken word: a sitting speaker would be heard only with difficulty.<sup>22</sup> The ensuing story of *Ate's* deception of Zeus—which, among its other interests and concerns, is an elaborate negative paradigm of the destructive effects of such interruption—demonstrates that the king shares the common Iliadic, and human, tendency to reduce problems and conflicts to intelligible forms of creative fiction through easily apprehensible parables and paradigms. Yet the form that his fiction takes on this occasion exemplifies an element of rhetorical hybris in the unfounded claim to unprecedented insight into the workings of the minds of the gods. In the *Iliad* not even the prophet Calchas quotes the exact words of the gods, and any valid claim to intimate knowledge of divine affairs—whether on the part of narrator or characters—requires explanation or apology.<sup>23</sup> Thus Achilles' confidence about Zeus' high regard for his mother rests upon a story that the goddess often used to tell in the halls of Peleus (1.396–406). Contrary to the normal

<sup>21</sup> Edwards (*supra* n.16) 244 believes that 19.80 refers to 1.292, but he finds Agamemnon's tone ungracious and jealous, and argues that the allusion to the earlier assembly is a pointed one. I find the king's rhetorical strategy quite subtle on this occasion.

<sup>22</sup> Σ *ad loc.* (Erbse IV [1975]). Epaphroditus erred, however, in believing that the king's gesture was intended to emphasize the humility of his words.

<sup>23</sup> Page (*supra* n.14) 313 finds Agamemnon's feat of temporary omniscience merely another of the many flaws of Book 19. A referee has suggested that the king's usurpation of the poet's prerogative of reporting conversation among the gods may provide evidence of his hybristic character.

practices of epic, Agamemnon here repeats verbatim the gods' words, a circumstance rendering the historicity of his account highly suspect.

The rhetorical form of Agamemnon's story has few parallels in the *Iliad*. George F. Held has pointed out that only the speech of Phoenix in Book 9, of Agamemnon in Book 19, and two speeches of Achilles to Priam in Book 24 contain both a parable and a paradigm. In addition, Held says, the stories of these speeches uniquely draw from sources other than the personal experience or imagination of the character-narrator.<sup>24</sup> The influence of the rhetorical agendas and subjective experiences of both Phoenix and Achilles upon the stories that they tell has been clearly documented. Thus Achilles' portrait of the dining Niobe (24.602), for example, arises from his wish to persuade Priam to eat, and the detail of the surrounding people turned to stone (611) may be a product of the hero's profound meditation on the destructive effects that sometimes attend the innocent when presumptuous mortals such as Priam, Agamemnon, and even Achilles dare to challenge the gods.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Agamemnon's story about ἄτη bears witness to the creative effects of personal experience upon existing traditional stories—or more likely, the story is an extemporaneous creation, a microcosmic summary of the *Iliad* from the king's viewpoint.<sup>26</sup>

After his exordium, Agamemnon shifts from generalization to parable and paradigm in pursuing his rhetorical strategy of covert criticism of Achilles, whom he attacks indirectly and by inference. The speech does close with explicit acknowledgement of the speaker's folly (ἄσάμην: 19.137) and a promise of gifts by way of compensation for the theft of Briseis. But early in the speech Agamemnon denies responsibility for the disaster in the assembly of Book 1 (19.86–89). Further, in the paradigmatic story about the origin of ἄτη among mortals he establishes a parallel between himself and Zeus, who was similarly once deluded, and by inference casts the upstart Achilles in the rôle of Hera, trouble-making underling of the king of the gods. In a

<sup>24</sup> G. F. Held, "Phoenix, Agamemnon and Achilles: Problems and Paradigmata," *CQ* N.S. 37 (1987) 245–61, esp. 245, 254.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. J. T. Kakridis, *Homeric Researches* (Lund 1949) 101.

<sup>26</sup> P. Vivante, *The Iliad: Action as Poetry* (Boston 1991) 99, considers the possibility that Agamemnon invented the story about Zeus and *Ate*; cf. M. Mueller, *The Iliad* (London 1984) 130, who rightly argues that Agamemnon has made up the story to make his responsibility appear in a flattering light.

continuing set of correspondences between the paradigm and the plot of the poem, Agamemnon casts himself as Eurystheus and Achilles as Heracles, in an eloquent and subtle justification of the legitimacy of his rule over the army at Troy.<sup>27</sup>

Lohmann (*supra* n.12: 77f) has meticulously elucidated the careful structuring of the main body of the speech and the elaborate set of parallels that link Agamemnon's experiences within the *Iliad* to Zeus' tribulations on Olympus. He shows that the account of Zeus' ἄτη (19.95–133) has been carefully inserted within two statements of the theme of Agamemnon's ἄτη (86–94, 134ff):

- I. Agamemnon's ἄτη (19.86–94, 134ff)
  - a. I was not to blame but Zeus, *Moirai*, and the Furies, who cast ἄτη on me in the assembly (86f)
  - b. on that day when I took Achilles' prize (89)
  - c. *but what was I to do?* (90)
  - d. Allegory about *Ate* (91–94)
- [II. Zeus' ἄτη (19.95–133)
  - a<sub>1</sub>. Zeus also once suffered from ἄτη (95ff)
  - b<sub>1</sub>. on that day when Alcmena was about to give birth to Heracles (98f)
  - c<sub>1</sub>. *lengthy description of the ἄτη of Zeus that was brought about through the intrigues of Hera* (100–25)
  - d<sub>1</sub>. Allegory about *Ate* (126–31)
  - e<sub>1</sub>. the laments of Zeus when he saw Heracles in service to Eurystheus (132f)]
  - e. so also I lamented when Hector was slaying the Argives (134ff)

By thus inextricably linking the two stories, Agamemnon implies an intricate set of correspondences between himself and Zeus. First of all, both were the victims of ἄτη. Second, the day on which Agamemnon took Achilles' prize (ἦματι τῷ ὄτ', 89) nicely corresponds to the day on which (ἦματι τῷ ὄτ', 98) Alcmena prepared to give birth to Heracles. The king cleverly sidesteps any elucidation of the third parallel. By praeteritio, he dismisses his own case in one line with the rhetorical question:

<sup>27</sup> The following section of this paper owes much to the helpful comments of Richard Janko and to O. M. Davidson, "Indo-European Dimensions of Heracles in *Iliad* 19.95–133," *Arethusa* 13 (1980) 197–202.

“But what was I to do?” (90) and then describes at length the details of Zeus’ manipulation by Hera, the premature birth of Eurystheus, and his ascendancy over Heracles (100–25). According to Lohmann (*supra* n.12: 77f), the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles is simply too well known to the listener for the poet to repeat it in detail. Unfortunately, such an explanation forestalls a proper appreciation of the speaker’s consistent rhetorical agenda throughout the speech: significant elements of Agamemnon’s own story must of necessity be suppressed lest the implied equation within the paradigm between Achilles and the troublemaking Hera become too explicit. As in the exordium of the speech, Achilles is damned, but only by inference. Fourth, the allegorical description of *Ate* (91–94) nicely balances the account of her dismissal from Olympus (126–31). Finally, the aftermath of Zeus’ regret (132f) is set immediately before the description of Agamemnon’s similar suffering (134ff).

Let us return for a moment to a consideration of the odd disproportionality in length of Agamemnon’s treatment of the third parallel: the ellipsis contrived in the rhetorical question of line 90 and its carefully-elaborated Olympian counterpart in lines 100–25. The obvious but unstated analogy between Agamemnon and Zeus, on the one hand, and Achilles and Hera, on the other, actually repeats, while reducing to crudely simplistic form, a complex set of parallels and contrasts drawn by the narrator in Book 1 between the quarrel of Agamemnon and Achilles and the domestic spat between Zeus and Hera that closes the book.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, what the king conceals about his personal interpretation of the quarrel with Achilles can be gleaned from what he reveals about the intrigue on Olympus. For Hera, challenging the authority of the greatest of the gods, thwarted him in the accomplishment of this purpose—or in the goddess’ cleverly ambiguous language, she prevented him from putting ‘the finishing touches’ (τέλος: 107) on his speech (μύθῳ: 107).<sup>29</sup> Hera, frustrating the birth of Heracles and accomplishing

<sup>28</sup> Cf. J. T. Sheppard, *The Pattern of the Iliad* (London 1922) 22f; Owen (*supra* n.15) 15f.

<sup>29</sup> Hera’s triumph over Zeus in the paradigm of Book 19 consisted at least in part in the public (cf. 100, πάντεσσι θεοῖσι) humiliation of a superior in power through the clever manipulation of language. Does this detail of the story spring from the bitter memory of Achilles’ victory in language at the end of the assembly in Book 1? Claiming that Zeus will not put the τέλος to his

her own designs in the premature birth of Eurystheus, becomes symbolic of Achilles, who similarly frustrated Agamemnon's performance as a speaker of words. Here, Agamemnon achieves his finest moment as poet and story-teller, developing a cosmic equivalent for Achilles' interruption in the assembly of Book 1, an event referred to in equally cryptic fashion in one of the generalizations that constitute the exordium of the speech (*cf.* 79f). Within the eloquent silence of the *praeteritio* at line 90, Agamemnon constructs his own version of the *Iliad*: 'see what happens when you interrupt the king?'

A further level of significance to the king's discourse must be noted, since the story of Eurystheus and Heracles—a paradigm within the greater paradigm of Zeus and Hera—seems designed as an added reflection of Agamemnon's perceived relationship to Achilles. For the account of the birth of Heracles chronicles, as Davidson has shown (*supra* n.27: 200), the subordination of a greater hero to a lesser commander and thus establishes a parallel between Agamemnon and Eurystheus, on the one hand, and Achilles and Heracles on the other. Davidson claims that the parallel is unconsciously ironic, as if rhetoric has outrun intent, and Agamemnon has unwittingly placed himself in an unfavorable light. Perhaps, however, the king's orchestration of his material, even in this small detail, reveals a conscious strategy of defense for his conduct within the poem. For, although Achilles like Heracles may be the greater warrior, Agamemnon like Eurystheus possesses the sceptre of Zeus (*cf.* 2.100–08), which guarantees a supremacy that ought not to have been questioned. Agamemnon's self-defense is in some ways vigorous and compelling. What are we, the audience of the poem, to make of his speech?

The poet's placement of Agamemnon's last major speech so early in the poem seems subtly ironic. In fact, a certain untimeliness in deed and word seems to characterize the king. His offer

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μῦθος, the goddess first dares the king of the gods to end his speech with an oath that the child born that day from the blood of Zeus should rule over all of the dwellers-around. Moreover, she simultaneously (and covertly) declares that he shall not accomplish his explicit purpose. Bruce Heiden, "Shifting Contexts in the *Iliad*," *Eranos* 89 (1991) 3, nicely points out that Hera's opposition takes the form of a refusal to respect the context and occasion determining the meaning of Zeus' utterance.

of gifts to Achilles in Book 9 may have been premature.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, too much has yet to occur in the *Iliad* before the meaning of the poem will be made explicit in the reflections, parables, and paradigms of Achilles in Book 24. Perhaps we should take a cue from Achilles, for Homer frequently creates an audience *within* the poem in order to reflect or shape the views and attitudes of the audience *of* the poem.<sup>31</sup> And despite the patience with which he endures the king's speech, Achilles expresses evident disapproval of its contents through use of κλοτοπέυειν (19.149) and διατρίβειν (150). The precise significance of the former verb may be open to dispute, but, like the latter, it is obviously not intended as a flattering characterization.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Lynn-George (*supra* n.11) 165ff notes that the offer of Book 9 comes too early; Zeus has already promised an Achaean defeat on the next day (*cf.* 8.470–76). Book 16 is the proper time for the king's approach.

<sup>31</sup> *Cf.* W. F. Wyatt, Jr, "Homer in Performance: *Iliad* 1.348–427," *CJ* 83 (1988) 290.

<sup>32</sup> An earlier draft of this paper was delivered at Washington University in St Louis on 13 October 1990. I would like to thank William Sale for the invitation to speak. Later drafts were delivered at Dartmouth College and Williams College. I would like to thank the faculty of Dartmouth College and Meredith Hoppin for these invitations.