

The κλιμός of Achilles, *Iliad* 24.596–98

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ἦ ῥα, καὶ ἐς κλισίην πάλιν ἦϊε δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς
ἔζετο δ' ἐν κλιμῶ πολυδαιδάλω ἔνθεν ἀνέστη
τοίχου τοῦ ἐτέρου, ποτὶ δὲ Πρίαμον φάτο μῦθον.

THE USUAL INTERPRETATION of these verses goes something like this: “Thus the noble Achilles spoke, and returned to the hut, and sat down on the richly-wrought κλιμός from which he had risen by the wall opposite, and spoke a word to Priam.” The difficulty in this interpretation is that Achilles is described as taking his seat on a “κλιμός from which he had risen,” whereas he had actually arisen, at *Il.* 24.515, from a different kind of seat, a θρόνος.

Eustathius remarks that the κλιμός at *Il.* 24.597 is equated with a θρόνος; he speaks of the ταυτότης of θρόνος and κλιμός.¹ Modern scholars agree, but they count this equation a flaw.² Walter Leaf points to what he considers a similar confusion in *Iliad* 11.³ At *Il.* 11.623 the seats of Nestor and Machaon are spoken of together as κλιμοί, while at *Il.* 11.645 Nestor’s seat is described as a θρόνος. Perhaps, however, the plural κλιμοί is being used elliptically here as a general designation for the two specific seats, the κλιμός of Machaon and the θρόνος of Nestor; and so the inconsistency is only apparent. In *Iliad* 24, on the other hand, the inconsistency is very real: the singular is used in both instances, first θρόνος, then κλιμός. Furthermore, this inconsistency is made glaring by the fact that a great deal of attention is given to seats and seating in this book of the *Iliad*.

There are three important kinds of seats in Homer, the δίφρος, the

¹ Eustathius on *Il.* 24.598, p.1336.60.

² See especially Rudolf Peppmüller, *Commentar des Vierundzwanzigsten Buches der Ilias mit Einleitung* (Berlin 1876) 285; and Götz Beck, *Die Stellung des 24. Buches der Ilias in der alten Epen-tradition* (Bamberg 1964) 243.

³ Leaf on *Il.* 24.597.

κλιςμός and the θρόνος; all of them are mentioned in *Iliad* 24. At *Il.* 24.515 Achilles, taking pity on Priam, rises from his θρόνος and, at 522, invites Priam to sit on a θρόνος. Priam at first refuses, but soon obeys when Achilles, his wrath aroused, changes his invitation to a command. Thereupon Achilles goes out of the hut, sees to the body of Hector and prays to the shade of Patroclus. Meanwhile Priam's herald Idaeus is brought in and made to sit on a δίφρος. The verses in question describe how Achilles, after his prayer, reenters the hut. "Thus the noble Achilles spoke, and returned to the hut, and sat down on the richly-wrought κλιςμός." If this κλιςμός is the same as the θρόνος from which he had risen, we must understand that Achilles has two θρόνοι at his disposal, and that he rises to offer Priam a θρόνος other than his own.

Siegfried Laser has recently described the kinds of seats in Homer and the importance of each for Homeric etiquette.⁴ The δίφρος was a stool which was used especially by subordinates and servants; it is appropriate that the herald Idaeus should receive such a seat. The κλιςμός was a chair with a back; it was used especially by women, but also by men of lesser rank or younger years. What is important for us is that the κλιςμός was the seat on which the host frequently sat when entertaining his guest. The θρόνος, with its stiffer and usually more upright back, and perhaps with armrests, was a more elegant chair than the κλιςμός. Gods and kings sat on θρόνοι, and guests were invited to take such seats of honor. Thus it would be good Homeric etiquette for Achilles to offer Priam a θρόνος and take for himself the more lowly seat, the κλιςμός.

Laser suggests that this feeling for etiquette may have caused the poet, inconsistently, to describe Achilles' θρόνος as a κλιςμός in our passage.⁵ This explanation, however, seems to assume that the poet, in spite of the emphasis he puts on seating in *Iliad* 24, was unconscious of an inconsistency about seats, or that being conscious of such an inconsistency he was not disposed to avoid it. It requires him to be both careful and inconsistent, or else both attentive and forgetful with regard to the same matter. I find this hard to believe, and doubt that Homer has nodded even under the pressure of etiquette. I think that he would have been conscious of the inconsistency and that he might easily have avoided it. He might, for instance, have ended *Il.* 24.597

⁴ Siegfried Laser, "Hausrat," *Archaeologia Homerica* II Kap.P (Göttingen 1968) 34ff and 45ff.

⁵ Laser, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.4) 39.

with ἀργυροήλω, which is metrically equivalent to ἔνθεν ἀνέστη, and had Achilles sit on a κλισμός which was ‘silver-studded’ instead of one ‘from which he had risen’: ἔζετο δ’ ἐν κλισμῷ πολυδαιδάλω ἀργυροήλω.⁶

I suggest that the poet did not compose such a verse because, unlike his later interpreters, he did not take ἔνθεν ἀνέστη with κλισμῷ to mean ‘κλισμός from which he had risen’—forgetting or not caring that Achilles had actually risen from a θρόνος—but rather with τοίχου τοῦ ἐτέρου at the beginning of the succeeding line. I understand ἔνθεν ἀνέστη | τοίχου τοῦ ἐτέρου to mean ‘on the side opposite that from which he had risen’ and translate as follows: “Thus the noble Achilles spoke, and returned to the hut, and sat down on a richly-wrought κλισμός on the side opposite that from which he had risen, and spoke a word to Priam.” According to this interpretation there is no inconsistency in having Achilles sit on a κλισμός, nor need he have two θρόνοι. Achilles offers his own θρόνος to Priam and prevails upon him to take it; after leaving the hut and returning, he takes for himself a seat on a κλισμός “on the side opposite that from which he had risen,” that is, opposite Priam, who is now seated on the θρόνος from which Achilles had risen. Thus Achilles observes the points of Homeric etiquette we have described, with the additional refinement, which we shall discuss later, of yielding his own seat to his guest.

The expression τοίχου τοῦ ἐτέρου (or ἐτέροιο) occurs at two other places in Homer:

αὐτὸς [Achilles] δ’ ἀντίον ἴζεν Ὀδυσσῆος θείοιο
τοίχου τοῦ ἐτέροιο, . . . (Il. 9.218f)

ἔζετ’ [Penelope] ἔπειτ’ Ὀδυσσῆος ἐναντίη, ἐν πυρὸς ἀγῆ,
τοίχου τοῦ ἐτέρου· ὁ δ’ ἄρα πρὸς κίονα μακρὴν
ἦστο . . . (Od. 23.89ff)

At Il. 9.218f Achilles is sitting opposite (ἀντίον) Odysseus, and at Od. 23.89ff Penelope is sitting opposite (ἐναντίη) Odysseus. Eustathius notes that the τοίχου τοῦ ἐτέρου (-οιο) at the beginning of the second verse of these passages emphasizes the fact, already expressed by ἀντίον and ἐναντίη, that one person is sitting opposite another.⁷ I think this a correct observation which should throw light on the same phrase at Il. 24.598. For the τοίχου τοῦ ἐτέρου of our passage, however,

⁶ Cf. Il. 18.398: τὴν μὲν ἔπειτα καθεῖεν ἐπὶ θρόνου ἀργυροήλου. Might not a richly-wrought κλισμός be silver-studded no less than a θρόνος?

⁷ Eustathius on Il. 9.219, p.749.16, and Od. 23.90, p.1939.5.

Eustathius merely gives the explanation ἀντικρὺ κατὰ τὸν ἕτερον τοῖχον, ‘over against the opposite wall’,⁸ and most modern scholars offer the interpretation ‘by the wall opposite the door of the hut’.⁹ It seems to me that we should interpret this τοῖχου τοῦ ἑτέρου conformably to the other two passages where it occurs in Homer, to express the idea that one person sits opposite another. It of course necessarily expresses this idea if we take it with ἔνθεν ἀνέστη. Achilles sits on the side opposite that from which he had risen to give his seat to his guest.

I translate τοῖχου τοῦ ἑτέρου ‘on the side opposite’ rather than ‘by the wall opposite’, for it seems likely to me that this formula is used only to express the idea of opposition, as a synonym for ἀντίον or ἐναντίος. At *Od.* 23.89ff Penelope and Odysseus are apparently sitting near the central hearth; Penelope is described as having her seat ἐν πυρὸς ἀγῆ, ‘in the glow of the fire’, and Odysseus is leaning against a pillar, presumably one of the four pillars that surround the central hearth.¹⁰ They are thus in the center of the room and not near a wall. Accordingly, the τοῖχου τοῦ ἑτέρου at *Od.* 23.90 seems not to refer to a wall; and we should probably not think of Penelope as sitting ‘by the wall opposite’ Odysseus but only ‘on the side opposite’ him.¹¹

The closest parallel I have found for the proposed interpretation of ἔνθεν ἀνέστη is at *Od.* 5.195f:

⁸ Eustathius on *Il.* 24.598, p.1366.54.

⁹ So Ameis-Hentze on *Il.* 24.598 and the following translations: “contre le mur de fond” (Mazon); “against the inward wall” (Lattimore); “facing the door” (Graves). I think that Samuel Butler probably has the same idea: “by the wall that was at right angles to the one against which Priam was sitting.”

¹⁰ *Od.* 6.305ff should be compared, where Arete, ἐν πυρὸς ἀγῆ, and Alcinoos have their seats by a pillar near the central hearth.

¹¹ We might also compare the τοῦτέρου τοῖχου in Hipponax 24a (Diehl):

Ἐρμῆ, φίλ’ Ἐρμῆ, Μαιαδεῦ, Κυλλήνιε,
ἐπέυχομαί τοι· κάρτα γὰρ κακῶς ῥιγῶ.
· · · · ·
δοῦς χλαῖναν Ἰππώνακτι καὶ κυπακίσκον
καὶ σαμβάλισκα κάσκερίσκα καὶ χρυσοῦ
στατήρας ἐξήκοντα τοῦτέρου τοῖχου.

Hipponax is praying to Hermes for clothes and money. I think that the τοῦτέρου τοῖχου here may mean simply ‘on the other side’, and that thus the clothes on the one hand are seen as balancing the money on the other; for which idea we can compare Hipponax 29 (Diehl), where Plutus says, “I give you thirty minae of silver and much else besides” (δίδωμί τοι μῶς ἀργύρου τριήκοντα | καὶ πόλλ’ ἔτ’ ἄλλα). For other examples of τοῖχος meaning ‘side’—a boat, for instance, has two τοῖχοι, ‘sides’—see *LSJ*.

καὶ ῥ' ὁ [Odysseus] μὲν ἔνθα καθέζετ' ἐπὶ θρόνου, ἔνθεν ἀνέστη
'Ερμείας, . . .

The enjambement I recommend, though admittedly harsher, is similar to the one in this passage. In both instances an ἔνθεν ἀνέστη is not properly understood until the beginning of the succeeding verse. The ἔνθεν of our ἔνθεν ἀνέστη is treated as a genitive answering to the ἑτέρου of τοίχου τοῦ ἑτέρου. We can compare Hesiod, *Scut.* 281, ἔνθεν δ' αὖθ' ἐτέρωθε, 'and then on the other side from that', where the ἔνθεν answers to ἐτέρωθε; and less effectively *Od.* 12.235, ἔνθεν γὰρ Σκύλλη, ἐτέρωθι δὲ δῖα Χάρυβδις, 'for on one side is Scylla, and on the other divine Charybdis', where the ἔνθεν is balanced by ἐτέρωθι.

Edwards notes that ποτὶ δὲ Πρίαμον φάτο μῦθον, which fills out *Il.* 24.598 after τοίχου τοῦ ἑτέρου, is a unique expression in Homer.¹² This fact leads us to ask why the poet did not compose such a verse as εἰσορόων Πρίαμον, καὶ μιν πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπεν instead of τοίχου τοῦ ἑτέρου, ποτὶ δὲ Πρίαμον φάτο μῦθον. The formula καὶ μιν πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπεν occurs seven times in the *Iliad* and nine times in the *Odyssey*; and for ἔνθεν ἀνέστη | εἰσορόων Πρίαμον we can compare *Od.* 21.392f:

ἔζετ' [Philoitios] ἔπειτ' ἐπὶ δίφρον ἰών, ἔνθεν περ ἀνέστη,
εἰσορόων Ὀδυσῆα . . .

I think the reason the poet did not compose such a formulaic verse is that he wished to connect τοίχου τοῦ ἑτέρου with ἔνθεν ἀνέστη. He had then, however, to express the name of the person Achilles sits opposite and addresses, that is, Priam; and so he invented ποτὶ δὲ Πρίαμον φάτο μῦθον.

Our understanding of *Il.* 24.597–98 does much more, I think, than merely rid us of the inconsistency of equating a κλισμός with a θρόνος. It brings to our attention one of the finer points of Homeric etiquette and helps us explain what Aristotle calls the 'anomalous character' of Achilles. Achilles offers his own θρόνος to Priam, and takes for himself the more lowly κλισμός. For the host to offer his own seat to his guest and take for himself a less elegant one seems to have been a regular feature of heroic etiquette. Another example of this ritual of hospitality has been seen at *Od.* 1.125ff. Telemachus, welcoming Athena-Mentes to the palace of Odysseus, after taking care of her spear, leads her to a seat on a θρόνος, to which he then draws up a

¹² Mark W. Edwards, "Homeric Speech Introductions," *HSCP* 74 (1968) 28.

κλιςμός for himself. The scholiast remarks on the excellent manners of Telemachus as follows: ὑποφαίνει διὰ τούτου καὶ ἄλλο τι καθήκον, ὅτι τοῦ ἰδίου θρόνου παρεχώρησε τῷ ξένῳ ὁ Τηλέμαχος. πάντα οὖν ἐλέγχει τὸ σῶφρον τοῦ νέου, τὰ τοῦ λόγου, τὰ τοῦ τρόπου, τό τε ἔγχος ἀναλαμβάνειν καὶ τοῦ θρόνου παραχωρεῖν.¹³ That it was customary for the host to offer his own seat to his guest is also shown at *Il.* 11.645–46, where Nestor rises from a *θρόνος* and bids his guest Patroclus to be seated; and at *Hymn to Demeter* 191ff, where Metaneira offers her seat to the disguised Demeter. Similarly, at *Il.* 24.100—the book in which our passage occurs—when Thetis comes to Olympus, Athena rises to give her her seat next to Zeus.

A vexed question for Homeric scholars has been the sudden change in the character of Achilles during his reception of Priam. Achilles at first politely offers the *θρόνος* to Priam, but Priam refuses to be seated while Hector lies uncared for, and asks Achilles to accept the ransom and let him go. Thereupon Achilles becomes irate, and threatening death forces Priam to sit. The character of Achilles in this scene is described by Aristotle as ‘anomalous’ (*ἀνώμαλον . . . τὸ Ἀχιλλέως ἦθος*).¹⁴ Nilsson cites it as a prime example of what he terms the ‘psychological instability’ (*psychische Labilität*) of the Homeric hero.¹⁵ Nilsson recognizes that Priam has refused Achilles’ friendship, but he thinks this refusal justified under the circumstances, and Achilles’ sudden wrath unreasonable. It seems to me that my interpretation helps us to understand Achilles’ reaction to Priam. The poet of *Iliad* 24 was much exercised to describe the proper seating of Priam, and he presumably considered it as very important for his characterization of Achilles. Achilles, in giving up his wrath, has returned to the civilized world of polite society, and he insists that the forms be observed. He demands that Priam accept his hospitality. He rises and offers his own *θρόνος* to Priam. This is his first gesture of friendship—later he will prevail upon Priam to eat with him and sleep in his hut—and Priam rejects it! Priam rejects any real reconciliation with Achilles, and Achilles is very understandably wrathful. Bassett writes of Achilles’ character as follows: “He is courteous to a fault: witness

¹³ Schol. *ad Od.* 1.132, Ludwich (= *Od.* 1.130, Dindorf).

¹⁴ Schol. BT *ad Il.* 24.569; *Aristotelis qui ferebantur librorum fragmenta*, ed. Rose (Leipzig 1886) fr.186; from Aristotle’s *Homeric Problems*.

¹⁵ Martin P. Nilsson, “Götter und Psychologie bei Homer,” *ArchRW* 22 (1923–24) 363ff = *Opuscula Selecta* I (Lund 1951) 355–91.

his words to the heralds of Agamemnon (*A* 334–336), and his last words, at the Games, to Agamemnon himself (*Ψ* 890–894).¹⁶ Witness also his hospitality to Priam.

The reason why *ἔνθεν ἀνέστη* has not been taken with *τοίχου τοῦ ἐτέρου* is, undoubtedly, the fact that this is an extremely harsh enjambement, harsher perhaps than any other in Homer.¹⁷ I think, however, that Homer's first audiences would have probably welcomed it. They would have noticed that Achilles had, as etiquette required, yielded his *θρόνος* to Priam, and they would have been conscious of the inconsistency of having him sit on a *κλισμός* from which he had risen. They would thus not have connected *ἔνθεν ἀνέστη* with *κλισμῶ* unless they were forced to do so, but would have eagerly accepted the enjambement *ἔνθεν ἀνέστη | τοίχου τοῦ ἐτέρου*.

Il. 24.597–98, as we have interpreted it, is intricate, but it seems to me that this intricacy beautifully reflects the very difficult and delicate reconciliation between Achilles and Priam. Achilles enters the hut and sits on a *κλισμός* opposite Priam, who is seated on the *θρόνος* of Achilles. This passage sets the tone for the bittersweet invitation to eat that Achilles, with the utmost tenderness and politeness, makes to Priam, telling him the story of Niobe, how eating did not prevent her from grieving forever. Both intricacy of thought and delicacy of feeling pervade this whole section of *Iliad* 24. The enjambement *ἔνθεν ἀνέστη | τοίχου τοῦ ἐτέρου* is subtle, stimulating poetry that enhances our appreciation of one of the greatest scenes in literature.¹⁸

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¹⁶ Samuel E. Bassett, *The Poetry of Homer* (Sather Lectures 15, Berkeley 1938) 188.

¹⁷ On enjambement in Homer see especially Milman Parry, "The Distinctive Character of Enjambement in Homeric Verse," *TAPA* 60 (1929) 200ff; Mark W. Edwards, "Some Features of Homeric Craftmanship," *TAPA* 97 (1966) 115ff; and G. S. Kirk, "Studies in Some Technical Aspects of Homeric Style," *YCS* 20 (1966) 105ff.

¹⁸ I am grateful to Miss Shannon DuBose for reading this paper and suggesting improvements.