

Epic

Lecture 3

Monday 19 October

Topics discussed in this lecture

- narratology (= the study of narrative)
- speeches
- *ecphrasis* (= description of a visual object in literature)

Narratology

- What does narratology contribute to the study of the *Iliad*?
- The importance of focalisation or point of view
- How does the poet use 'time'? How does the poet use rhythm and pace?
- How does the poet use flashforwards and flashbacks?
- Why does the poet use so-called mirror stories?

Speeches

- Why does the *Iliad* contain so many speeches?
- What types of speeches are there?
- What are speeches for?
- How do the speeches from characters differ from the (primary) narrator's text?
- How do speeches serve characterisation?

Iliad 1

- 1-343: narrator's version of events
- 306-492: Achilles' version of events (as told to Thetis)

Iliad, 1.346-350

- He led forth from the hut Briseis of the fair cheeks and gave her
to be taken away; and they walked beside the ships of the Achaians,
and the woman all unwilling went with them still. But Achilles
weeping went and sat in sorrow apart from his companions
Beside the beach of the grey sea looking out on the infinite water.

Iliad, 1.351-356

- Many times stretching forth his hands he called on his mother:

‘Since, my mother, you bore me to be a man with a short life, therefore Zeus of the loud thunder on Olympos should grant me

honour at least. But now he has given me not even a little.

Now the son of Atreus, powerful Agamemnon,

has dishonoured me, since he has taken away my prize and keeps it.’

Iliad, 1.364-371

- Sighing heavily Achilles of the swift feet answered her:
‘You know; since you know why must I tell you all this?
We went against Thebe, the sacred city of Eetion,
and the city we sacked, and carried everything back to this
place,
and the sons of the Achaians made a fair distribution
and for Atreus’ son they chose out Chryseis of the fair cheeks.
Then Chryses, priest of him who strikes from afar, Apollo,
came beside the fast ships of the bronze-armoured Achaians
to ransom.

Iliad, 1.380-382 & 386-388

- The old man went back in anger, but Apollo
Listened to his prayer, since he was very dear to him, and
let go
a wicked arrow against the Argives.

It was I first of all urged then the god's appeasement;
and the anger took hold of Atreus' son, and in speed
standing

He uttered his threat against me, and now it is a thing
accomplished.

Iliad, 1.393-398

- You then, if you have power to, protect your own son,
going
to Olympos and supplicating Zeus, if ever before now
either by word you comforted Zeus' heart or by action.
Since it is many times in my father's hall I have heard
you
making claims, when you said you only among the
immortals
beat aside shameful destruction from Kronos' the dark-
misted.

Iliad, 1.503-507

- Father Zeus, if ever before in word or action
I did you favour among the immortals, now grant what I
ask for.
Now give honour to my son short-lived beyond all other
Mortals. Since even now the lord of men Agamemnon
dishonours him, who has taken away his prize and keeps
it.

Iliad, 1.511-512 & 517-519; 528-530

- But Zeus who gathers the clouds made no answer but sat in silence a long time.

Deeply disturbed Zeus who gathers the clouds answered her: This is a disastrous matter when you set me in conflict with Hera, and she troubles me with recriminations.

He spoke, the son of Kronos, and nodded his head with the dark brows,
and the immortally anointed hair of the great god swept from his divine head, and all Olympos was shaken.

Iliad, 1.540-542 & 565-567

- ‘Treacherous one, what god has been plotting counsels with you?

Always is it dear to you heart in my absence to think of secret things and decide upon them.

But go then, sit down in silence, and do as I tell you,
For fear all the gods, as many as there are on Olympos,
can do nothing

If I came close and lay my unconquerable hands upon you.

Iliad, 1.596-598 & 609-611

- And smiling she accepted the goblet out of her son's hand. Thereafter beginning from the left he poured drinks for the other Gods, dipping up from the mixing bowl the sweet nectar.

Zeus the Olympian and lord of lightning went to his own bed, where always he lay when sweet sleep came on him.

Going up to bed he slept and Hera of the gold throne beside him.

Ecphrasis

- Traditional part of epic:
 - ❖ Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*
 - ❖ Jason's cloak in the *Argonautica*
 - ❖ Aeneas' shield in the *Aeneid*
- Generic expectations created as a result
- Shield descriptions: part of an arming scene
- Comparison with the shield of Agamemnon in *Iliad* and Heracles's shield in *Odyssey* 11.

Ecphrasis: general questions

- Which challenges and difficulties are there for the poet when he decides to include a literary description of a work of art in his poem?
- Is this a real object?
- How are visual / pictorial aspects emphasised?
- Does the poet pay attention to the material of the object described?
- Does the poet describe movement, sound or speech?
- Why would a poet want to include such a description in his work?
- What is the consequence for the rhythm and narrative action of the poem?

Ecphrasis: general questions

- Consider what is depicted on the object. Are there different vignettes? Can you think of any reasons why these would have been chosen?
- Think about the function of the descriptions within the narrative in which they are embedded. Are they merely a digression, an ornament?
- Who is viewing the object within the poem?
- Do we see the object through his/her eyes and does this have consequences for our perception of it?
- Does the poet try to engage us in the viewing process and direct our response?
- Is the art of viewing emphasised in the poem?
- Which challenges are posed to the listener?

Ecphrasis and the narrative

- What is the relationship between the scenes described in the *ecphrasis* and the main narrative?
- What is its function?
- Effect on the rhythm and pace of the narrative

Iliad 18

- 1-35: Achilles' mourning at the death of Patroclus
- 36-65: Thetis and the Nereids
- 66-146: scene between Thetis and Achilles in which he decides to give up his anger with Agamemnon and rejoin the battle field to avenge Patroclus
- 147-355: scenes round the body of Patroclus
- 356-367: Hera's and Zeus' discussion re the situation
- 368-467: Thetis asks Hephaistos to make new armour for her son
- 468-616: Hephaistos' making of the shield and shield description

Achilles' armour

- Symbol of mortality
- Symbol of what Achilles gives up in order to take revenge

Iliad 18.466-467: viewing the shield

- ‘As there shall be fine armour for him, such as another man out of many men shall wonder at, when he looks on it.’

Iliad, 18.478-482: emphasising the craftsmanship

- First of all he forged a shield that was huge and heavy, elaborating it about, and threw around it a shining triple rim that glittered, and the shield was cast of silver. There were five folds composing the shield itself, and upon it he elaborated many things in his skill and craftsmanship.

Scenes on the shield

- ordinary life
- community life
- everyday life
- parallel to the world described in similes
- missing: descriptions of poverty, trade, seafaring, cult
- no names/ no specific places: all scenes general and universal

Iliad, 18.482-489

- He made the earth upon it, and the sky, and the sea's water,
and the tireless sun, and the moon waxing into her fullness,
and on it all the constellations that festoon the heavens,
The Pleiades and the Hyades and the strength of Orion
and the Bear, whom men give also the name of the Wagon,
who turns about in a fixed place and looks at Orion
and she alone is never plunged in the wash of the Ocean.

Iliad, 18.490-496

- On it he wrought in all their beauty two cities of mortal Men. And there were marriages in one, and festivals. They were leading the brides along the city from their maiden chambers under the flaring of torches, and the loud bride song was arising.

The young men followed the circles of the dance, and among them the flutes and lyres kept up their clamour as in the meantime the women standing each at the door of her court admired them.

Iliad, 18.497-508

The people were assembled in the market place, where a quarrel had arisen, and two men were disputing over the blood price for a man who had been killed. One man promised full restitution in a public statement, but the other refused and would accept nothing. Both then made for an arbitrator, to have a decision; and people were speaking up on either side, to help both men. But the heralds kept the people in hand, as meanwhile the elders were in session on benches of polished stone in the sacred circle and held in their hands the staves of the heralds who lift their voices. The two men rushed before these, and took turns speaking their cases, and between them lay on the ground two talents of gold, to that judge who in this case spoke the straightest opinion.'

Iliad, 18.509-516

- But around the other city were lying to forces of armed men shining in their war gear. For one side counsel was divided whether to storm and sack, or share between both sides the property

and all the possessions the lovely citadel held hard within it. But the city's people were not giving away, and armed for an ambush.

Their beloved wives and their little children stood on the rampart to hold it, and with them the men with age upon them, but meanwhile

the others went out. And Ares led them, and Pallas Athene.

Iliad, 18.530-540

- But the other army, as soon as they heard the uproar arising from the cattle, as they sat in their councils, suddenly mounted Behind their light-footed horses, and went after, and soon overtook them. These stood their ground and fought a battle by the banks for the river, and they were making casts at each other with their spears bronze-headed;
and Hate was there with Confusion among them, and Death the destructive;
she was holding a live man with a new wound, and another one unhurt, and dragged a dead man by the feet through the carnage. The clothing upon her shoulders showed strong red with the men's blood. All closed together like living men and fought with each other and dragged away from each other the corpses of those who had fallen.

Iliad, 18.541-549

- He made upon it a soft field, the pride of tilled land, wide and triple-ploughed, with many ploughmen upon it who wheeled their teams at the turn and drove them in either direction.

And as these making their turn would reach the end-strip of the field,

a man would come up to them at this point and hand them a flagon

of honey-sweet wine, and they would turn again to the furrows in their haste to come again to the end-strip of the deep field.

The earth darkened behind them and looked like earth that has been ploughed

Though it was gold. Such was the wonder of the shield's forging.

Iliad 18, 554-560

There were three sheaf-binders who stood by, and behind
them
were children picking up the cut swathes, and filled their
arms with them
and carried and gave them always; and by them the king in
silence
and holding his staff stood near the line of the reapers,
happily
And apart and under a tree the heralds made the feast ready
and trimmed a great ox they had slaughtered. Meanwhile the
women
scattered, for the workmen to eat, abundant white barley.

Iliad, 18.567-572

- Young girls and young men, in all their light-hearted innocence,
carried the sweet fruit away in their woven baskets,
and in their midst a youth with a singing lyre played charmingly
upon it for them, and sang the beautiful song for Linos
in a light voice, and they followed him, and with singing
and whistling
and light dance-steps of their feet they kept time to the music.

Iliad 18.579-583

- But among the foremost of the cattle two formidable lions had caught hold of a bellowing bull, and he with loud lowings

was dragged away, as the dogs and the young men went in pursuit of him.

But the two lions, breaking open the hide of the great ox, gulped the black blood and the inward guts, as meanwhile the herdsmen were in the act of setting and urging the quick dogs on them.

Iliad 18, 590-596

- And the renowned smith of the strong arms made elaborate on it

a dancing floor, like that which once in the wide spaces of
Knosos

Daidalos built for Ariadne of the lovely tresses.

And there were young men on it and young girls, sought for
their beauty

with gifts of oxen, dancing and holding hands at the wrist.

These

wore, the maidens long light robes, but the men wore tunics
of fine-spun work and shining softly, touched with olive oil.

Iliad 18.603-609

- And around the lovely chorus of dancers stood a great multitude happily watching, while among the dancers two acrobats led the measures of song and dance revolving around them. He made on it the great strength of the Ocean River which ran around the uttermost rim of the shield's strong structure. Then after he had wrought this shield, which was huge and heavy, he wrought for him a corselet brighter than fire in its shining... Thereafter when the renowned smith of the strong arms had finished the armour he lifted it and laid it before the mother of Achilleus. And she like a hawk came sweeping down from the snows of Olympos and carried with her the shining armour, the gift of Hephaistos.

Bibliography specific to this lecture

- De Jong, I.J.F. (1987), *Narrators and Focalisers: The Presentation of the Story in the Iliad*, Amsterdam.
- De Jong, I.J.F. (1997), 'Homer and Narratology', in I. Morris & B. Powell (eds), *A New Companion to Homer*, Leiden, pp. 305-325.
- De Jong, I.J.F. (1999), 'The voice of anonymity: *tis*-speeches in the *Iliad*', in I.J.F. De Jong (ed.) (1999), *Homer: Critical Assessments* (vol. 3), London, pp. 258-272.
- De Jong, I.J.F. (1999), 'Explicit and implicit embedded focalization', in I.J.F. De Jong (ed.) (1999), *Homer: Critical Assessments* (vol. 3), London, pp. 370-395.
- De Jong, I.J.F. (2001), '*Iliad* 1.366-92: a mirror story', in D.L. Cairns (ed.) (2001), *Oxford Readings in Homer's Iliad*, Oxford, pp. 478-95.
- Edwards, M.W. (1987), *Homer: Poet of the Iliad*, Baltimore, pp. 88-97, 276-286.
- Edwards, M.W. (1991), *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume V: Books 17-20*, Cambridge, pp. 200-233.
- Friedrich, P. & Redfield, J. (1999), 'Speech as a personality symbol: The case of Achilles', in I.J.F. De Jong (ed.) (1999), *Homer: Critical Assessments* (vol. 4), London, pp. 231-261.

Bibliography specific to this lecture

- Griffin, J. (1986), 'Words and speakers in the *Iliad*', *JHS* 106, pp. 36-57.
- Griffin, J. (2004), 'The speeches', in R. Fowler (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, Cambridge, pp.156-170.
- Hardie, P.R. (1985), 'Imago Mundi: cosmological and ideological aspects of the shield of Achilles', *JHS* 105, pp. 11-31.
- Kirk, G.S. (1985), *The Iliad: A Commentary: Volume I: Books 1-4*, Cambridge.
- Lohman, D. (1999), 'The 'inner composition' of speeches in the *Iliad*', in I.J.F. De Jong (ed.) (1999), *Homer: Critical Assessments* (vol. 3), London, pp. 239-57.
- Pulleyn, S. (ed.) (2000), *Homer: Iliad I*, Oxford.
- Schein, S. (1984), *The Mortal Hero: An Introduction to Homer's Iliad*, Berkeley, pp. 140-41.
- Slatkin, L.M. (2001), 'The wrath of Thetis', in D.L. Cairns (ed.) (2001), *Oxford Readings in Homer's Iliad*, Oxford, pp. 409-434.
- Taplin, O. (1980), 'The Shield of Achilles within the *Iliad*', in I.J.F. De Jong (ed.) (1999), *Homer: Critical Assessments* (vol. 3), London, pp. 179-202 or in I. McAuslan & P. Walcott (eds) (1998), *Homer, Greece & Roman Studies*, Oxford, pp. 96-115 or in D.L. Cairns (ed.) (2001), *Oxford Readings in Homer's Iliad*, Oxford, pp. 342-364.