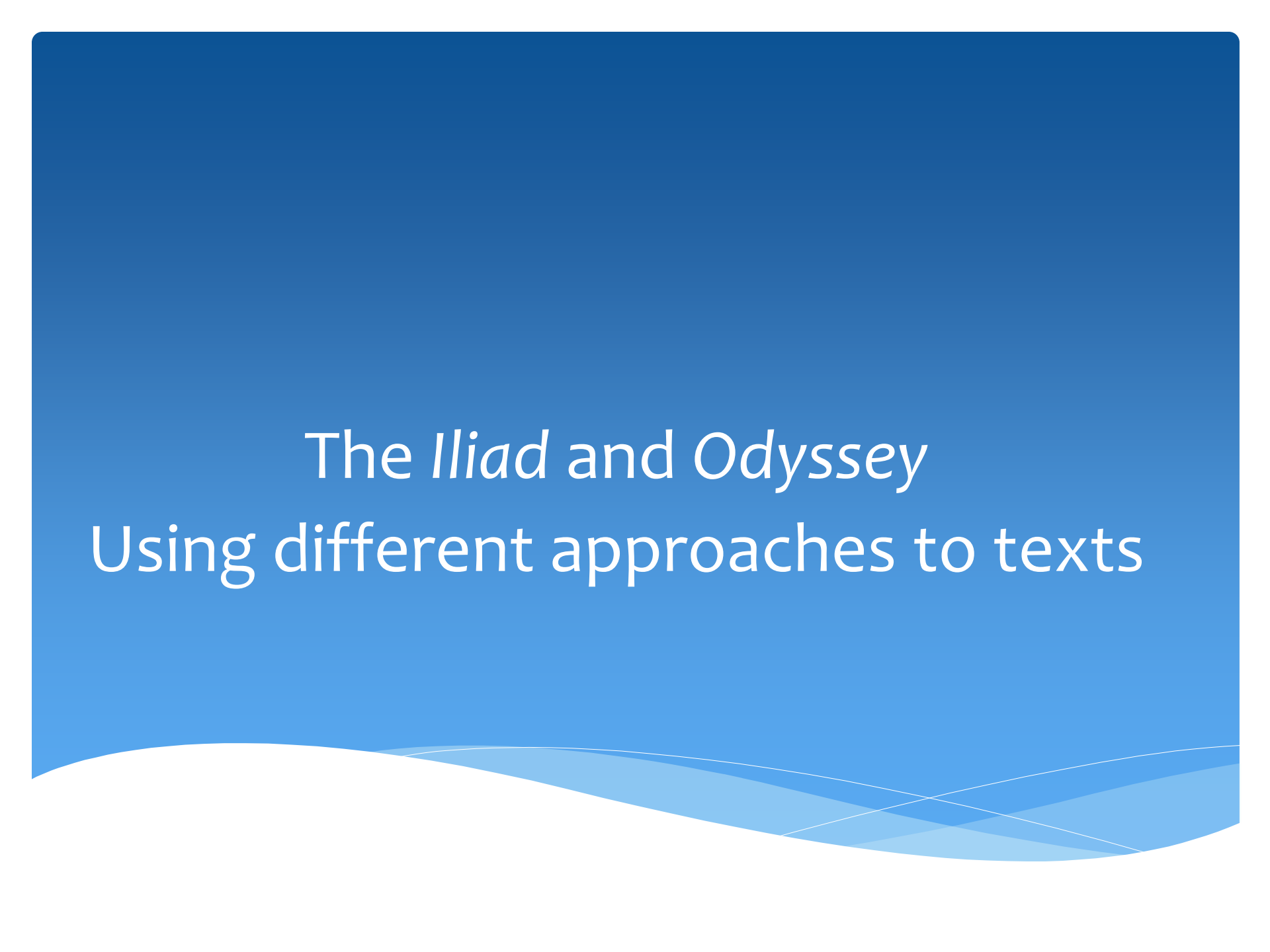




The *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

Using different approaches to texts

What are we doing?

- * what methods and strategies can we use to work through a text?
- * We will look at the *Iliad* (Bk. 6) through a lens focussed on gender.

Male and Female

- The Greek world was divided clearly in male and female sphere of responsibility/influence/power
 - Coming up: discussion of female attendance at the Great Dionysia
- Literature and drama were ways to explore and affirm these norms, just as they are today



A Gender Sensitive Reading: Iliad 6

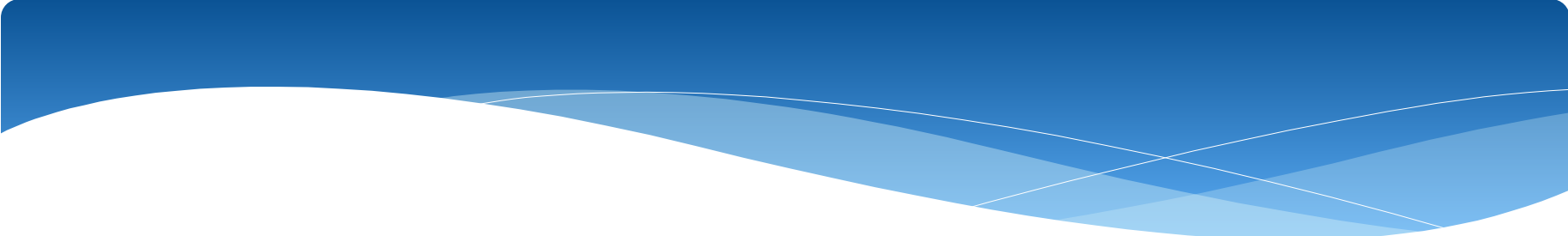
- * Lines 1-236 focus on Diomedes in battle
- * 237 onw.: Hector's return to the homes of Troy; he meets
 - * Wives of other soldiers eager for news
 - * His mother Hecuba, who wants to look after him and bring him wine; Hector asks her to see to the sacrificial robes of Athena, together with her ladies in waiting
 - * Helen and Paris (removed by Aphrodite from the fight with Menelaus and for whom Hector is looking)
'He found the man in his chamber busy with his splendid armour, the corselet and the shield, and turning in his hands the curved bow, while Helen of Argos was sitting among her attendant women directing the magnificent work done by her handmaidens.' (Hom. Il. 6.321-324)

Hector out of Place; Unmanly Paris

- * In *Iliad* 6, we move from the male sphere of the battlefield to the household dominion of the Trojan women:
 - * Hecuba offering refreshments
 - * Helen working wool with her maids in waiting, supervising servants
 - * It is clear that Hector does not belong properly there:
- * Hecuba: ‘Why then, child, have you come here and left behind the bold battle?’
- * Hector: declines wine, ‘for fear you stagger my strength and make me forget my courage’
- * [...] the house of Alexandros, a splendid place [...] a sleeping room and a hall and a courtyard [...] entered Hector, in his hand holding an eleven-cubit long spear
- * Hector scolds Paris: ‘you have scolded me rightly [...] it was not so much in coldness [...] that I sat in my room, but I wished to give myself over to sorrow.

Hector Out of Place

- * Paris: ‘But just now with soft words my wife was winning me over and urging me into the fight [...]’
 - * Giving over to feelings, and to a wife?
- * Helen, of Paris: ‘I wish I had been the wife of a better man than this is [...]’
 - * The dubiousness of Paris’ manliness flagged up for the audience
- * Hector: ‘Do not, Helen, make me sit with you, though you love me. [...] Already my heart is hastening me to defend the Trojans [‘send Paris after me, please’] for I am going first to my own house, so I can visit my own people, my beloved wife and my son, who is little [...]’
 - * Secure connection, but also clear division of gender spheres



So speaking Hector of the shining helm departed and in speed made his way to his own well-established dwelling, but failed to find in the house Andromache of the white arms; for she, with the child, and followed by one fair-robed attendant, had taken her place on the tower in lamentation and tearful. When he saw no sign of his perfect wife within the house, Hector stopped in his way on the threshold and spoke among the handmaidens: ‘Come then, tell me truthfully as you may, handmaidens: where has Andromache of the white arms gone? Is she with any of the sisters of her lord or the wives of his brothers? Or has she gone to the house of Athena, where all other lovely-haired women of Troy propitiate the grim goddess?’ Then in turn the hard-working housekeeper gave him an answer: ‘Hector, since you have urged me to tell you the truth, she is not with any of the sisters of her lord or the wives of her brothers, nor has she gone to the house of Athena, where all the other lovely-haired women of Troy propitiate the grim goddess, but she has gone to the great bastion of Ilion, because she heard that the Trojans were losing, and great grew the strength of the Achaians. Therefore she has gone in speed to the wall, like a woman gone mad, and a nurse attending carries the baby.’

A Temporary reversal: Andromache

- * First, note how different Hector's house is described 'well-established dwelling' – no frills – as compared to Paris' 'splendid palace'
- * Secondly, note that the home is where Hector expects to find Andromache: 'failed to find', and that the 'perfect wife' should normally be 'within the house', 'Andromache of the white arms' – no tan, normally inside, that she keeps a '*hard-working* housekeeper'
- * Thirdly, if she's out, Andromache would normally be at the house of another wife, or in the temple
- * When she deviates from this, she is described as 'a woman gone mad'

Hector and Andromache

[...] and Hector hastened from his home [...]. So as he had come to the gates on his way through the great city, the Skaian gates, whereby he would issue into the plain, there at last his own generous wife came running to meet him, Andromache. [...] She came to him there, and beside her went an attendant carrying the boy [...] a little child only, a baby. [...] Hector smiled in silence as he looked on his son, but she, Andromache, stood close beside him, letting her tears fall. [...] Hector, thus you are father to me, and my honoured mother, you are my brother, and you it is who are my young husband. Please take pity on me, stay here on the rampart, that you may not leave your child an orphan, your wife a widow, but draw your people up by the fig tree, there where the city is openest to attack, and where the wall may be mounted.

Hector and Andromache



Hector and Andromache

- * Hector's silence
 - * On the one hand, a subtle expression of emotion
 - * On the other, implying that in this sphere, still within the city, the man's role is less prominent
- * Andromache's family
 - * She describes her world wholly in terms of her family
 - * Cf. Sappho *Fr.* 44 with a lavish description of the wedding of Hector and Andromache
 - * 'do not leave [...] your wife a widow – implies that to a husband, a wife is important first and foremost in that capacity
 - * Hector picks up on this later, foretelling how Andromache will be described as 'the wife of Hector, who was ever the bravest fighter of the Trojans, breakers of horses, in the days when they fought about Ilion.'

Andromache out of Place?

- * Offering suggestions on how to plan the battle: ‘draw your people up by the fig tree’ etc
- * Overstepping the boundary? Is Andromache turning into a ‘bad’ wife?
- * The build-up: her behaviour in this scene is clearly highlighted as being out of the ordinary, and caused by extreme circumstances

Andromache In (Her Own) Place

So speaking he set his child again in the arms of his beloved wife, who took him back again to her fragrant bosom smiling in her tears. [...]

Hector comforts her: 'Go therefore back to our house, and take up your own work, the loom and the distaff, and see to it that your handmaidens ply their work also; but the men must see to the fighting, all men who are the people of Ilion, but I beyond others.' So glorious Hector spoke and again took up the helmet with its crest of horse hair, while his beloved wife went homeward, turning to look back on the way, letting the live tears fall.

Andromache The Wife

- * In this last section, the audience is made to envision Andromache in a home setting, working her wool among her maids
 - * This tallies with the description of Andromache at the time of Hector's death in *Iliad* 22.
- * That means that while the gender norms, boundaries between male and female spheres, have temporarily been stretched, the result is 'back to normal'
 - * Sets right earlier disruption 'revers[ing] the image of the loom from a symbol of domestic stability to a symbol of disrupted domestic harmony, as we see in Hector's fear that Andromache will serve as a slave at the loom of another man (6.456)' (Pantelia, 1993, 493)
- * ...and the result has been reached with mutual understanding and affection: this passage is unique in ancient literature

Iliad 22: Hector and Andromache

But Hector's wife had not yet heard the news. No one in fact had even gone to tell her that her husband had remained outside the gates. She was at work, in a corner of her lofty house, on a purple web of double width, which she was decorating with a floral pattern. In her innocence, she had just called to the ladies-in-waiting in her house to put a big cauldron on the fire so that Hector could have a hot bath when he came home from the battle – never dreaming that far away from all baths he lay dead at the hands of Achilles and bright-eyed Athene. But now the keening and moaning at the battlements reached her ears. [...] 'Alas, Hector; alas for me!' she cried. 'So you and I were born under the same unhappy star, you here in Priam's house and I in Thebe under wooded Placus in the house of Eetion [...]'

Other Tools: Structuralism

- * Structuralist critics seek for how meaning emerges from patterns in the contents
 - * Pairs and/or opposites are things to look for
- * *Iliad* 6 has a number of oppositional pairs:
 - * Battle field – houses in the city
 - * The world of men – the world of women
 - * Hector the ideal man – effeminate Paris
 - * Helen cajoling her husband to go to battle – Andromache pleading with Hector to stay out of it
 - * The way a wife should act – the way Andromache acts in this isolated instance
- * These patterns further bring to the fore the reinforcement of gender norms in the passage



(Athens) Spindle whorls, Acropolis Museum